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**DESERT HAWK**



(Portrait de Abd El Kader, Abd El-Kader Ben  
Mouloud Ben Ali à l'âge de 29 ans  
et inspiré d'un croquis pris en 1836.)

ABD EL KADER

at the age of 29

From a watercolour in the possession of Mlle Bugeaud D Isly

(Photo Plon)

# DESERT HAWK

*Abd el Kader and the French Conquest of Algeria*

*by*

WILFRID BLUNT

*With Sixteen Gravure Plates and a Map.*



METHUEN & CO. LTD. LONDON  
36 Essex Street, Strand, W.C.2

To  
**MARY HARRISON**

*First published in 1947*

CATALOGUE No. 3964/U

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN  
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## ABD EL KADER AT TOULON

### OR THE CAGED HAWK

No more, thou lithe and long-winged hawk, of desert-life for thee;

No more across the sultry sands shalt thou go swooping free:  
Blunt idle talons, idle beak, with spurning of thy chain,  
Shatter against thy cage the wing thou ne'er mayst spread again.

Long, sitting by their watchfires, shall the Kabyles tell the tale  
Of thy dash from Ben Halifa on the fat Mctidja vale;  
How thou swept'st the desert over, bearing down the wild El Riff,  
From eastern Beni Salah to western Ouad Shclf;

How thy white *burnous* went streaming, like the storm-rack o'er  
the sea,  
When thou rodest in the vanward of the Moorish chivalry;  
How thy razzia was a whirlwind, thy onset a sinoom,  
How thy sword-sweep was the lightning, dealing death from out  
the gloom !

Nor less quick to slay in battle than in peace to spare and save,  
Of brave men wisest councillor, of wise councillors most brave;  
How the eye that flashed destruction could beam gentleness and  
love,  
How lion in thee mated lamb, how eagle mated dove !

Availèd not or steel or shot 'gainst that charmed life secure,  
Till cunning France, in last resource, tossed up the golden lure:  
And the carrion buzzards round him stopped, faithless, to the cast,  
And the wild hawk of the desert is caught and caged at last.

Weep, maidens of Zerifah, above the ladan loom !  
Scar, chieftains of Al Elmah, your cheeks in grief and gloom !  
Sons of the Beni Snazam, throw down the useless lance,  
And stoop your necks and bate your backs to yoke and scourge of  
France !

'Twas not in fight they bore him down; he never cried *amdn*;  
He never sank his sword before the Prince of Franghistan;  
But with traitors all around him, his star upon the wane,  
He heard the voice of Allah, and he would not strive in vain.

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They gave him what he asked them; from King to King he spake,  
 As one that plighted word and seal not knoweth how to break:  
 'Let me pass from out my deserts, be't mine own choice where to  
 go;  
 I brook no fettered life to live, a captive and a show.'

And they promised, and he trusted them, and proud and calm he  
 came,  
 Upon his black mare riding, girt with his sword of fame.  
 Good steed, good sword, he rendered both unto the Frankish  
 throng;  
 He knew them false and fickle—but a Prince's word is strong.

How have they kept their promise? Turned they the vessel's  
 prow  
 Unto Acre, Alexandria, as they have sworn e'en now?  
 Not so: from Oran northwards the white sails gleam and glance,  
 And the wild hawk of the desert is borne away to France!

Where Toulon's white-walled lazaret looks southward o'er the  
 wave,  
 Sits he that trusted in the word a son of Louis gave.  
 O noble faith of noble heart! And was the warning vain,  
 The text writ by the Bourbon in the blurred black book of Spain?

They have need of thee to gaze on, they have need of thee to grace  
 The triumph of the Prince, to gild the pinchbeck of their race.  
 Words are but wind, conditions must be construed by Guizot;  
 Dash out thy heart, thou desert hawk, ere thou art made a show!

W. M. THACKERAY. January, 1848.

'To rifle a caravan is a crime . . .  
 to steal a continent is glory.'

Ouida: *Under Two Flags*.

'So familiar, and as it were so natural to man, is the  
 practice of violence, that our indulgence allows the  
 slightest provocation, the most disputable right, as a  
 sufficient ground of national hostility.'

Gibbon: *Decline and Fall*, ch. lviii.

## PREFACE

NEARLY eighty years have passed since the appearance of Colonel Churchill's *Life of Abd el Kader*, the only English biography of the humble *marabout* who for fifteen years held the invading armies of a great European Power at bay.

It may at first sight seem surprising that a Franco-Arab dispute should be a subject of interest to English readers, for it might reasonably be supposed that our own colonial history could furnish inexhaustible themes of greater significance for English pens to recount. But when we consider the character of the Emir Abd el Kader, it becomes evident that, in any age or country, so remarkable a man would be worthy of universal recognition. Many native leaders, all the world over, have bravely defended their homes against the cupidity of European imperialists; had the Emir been no more than a courageous patriot, he would merely command the respect that is due to bravery wherever it is found. But Abd el Kader was more than a hero. He fought with a chivalry which sometimes made the European aggressors appear by comparison a nation of barbarians. When at last he surrendered, the plighted word of France was not enough to save him from five years of unjust imprisonment; yet he not only forgave his enemies, but became their staunchest supporter and most loyal ally. Such magnanimity is hard to parallel.

It is much to be regretted that we have so little first-hand knowledge of the Emir during the bitter years of his struggle against France. Of the very few Europeans who saw him during that time, only one could claim his friendship. Not until the shadows of captivity had fallen upon him are we afforded more than a tantalizing glimpse of his remarkable and complex personality; and only from the pages of French reports, official and unofficial, can we tentatively reconstruct a portrait of him which, in the light of what he subsequently revealed, may prove to be a passable if sketchy likeness. The reader must therefore be indulgent if he finds that the hero seems for too long to be obscured by the smoke of battle.

Twenty years ago, there appeared in France a book by Colonel Azan entitled *L'Emir Abd el Kader, 1808-1883. Du Fanatisme*

*Musulman au Patriotisme Français*—a scholarly and impartial account which is likely to remain the standard biography. Had it been available in English, I might have hesitated to undertake this present work. But admirable as Colonel Azan's book is, for the average English reader it is not wholly satisfactory: it is too detailed; and it assumes a general knowledge of Algerian affairs which cannot be expected of readers in this country. I have therefore included in my book accounts of certain campaigns which, though they are not directly concerned with Abd el Kader, are necessary to the understanding of the story of the conquest; and I have sometimes preferred, at the risk of some loss of proportion, to describe more fully those operations which are well documented, believing that by such means I can give a more vivid picture of the actual conditions of Algerian warfare.

As regards the vexed question of the spelling of Arabic words, I have attempted, where places and persons in Algeria are concerned, to keep to the forms used by the French; but only those who have themselves tried will appreciate the difficulty of being consistent.

My thanks are due to many who have helped me with suggestions; to my mother, Lionel Gough and Tom Lyon who toiled through an uninviting and heavily corrected typescript, and who offered advice which, if it was not always taken, was at least carefully considered; to Sir Sydney Cockerell for permission to reproduce an unpublished photograph of Abd el Kader from an album in his possession; to my brothers Christopher and Anthony for securing photographs from France; to Messrs. Plon for permission to reproduce illustrations from Esquer's admirable *Iconographie de l'Algérie*; to M. Maurichau-Beaupré, Director of the Versailles Museum, for providing photographs of paintings in that collection; to the staff of the London Library for their help and courtesy; to Richard Cribb for his excellent map; and to my mother for reading the proofs.

A special word of thanks must go to Arthur Harrison, under whose hospitable roof much of this book was written. But above all I am indebted to Mary Harrison, whose generous encouragement and stimulating criticism at every stage of my work were quite invaluable to me.

W. J. W. B.

Baldwin's Shore,  
Eton College.  
October 20, 1943.

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## CHAPTER I

### ALGIERS

ON April 29, 1827, an undignified little scene, but one not without precedent in oriental courts, took place in a pavilion of the Kasbah at Algiers—the Dey struck the French Consul in the face with his fly-whisk. This trivial episode, famous to history as the *coup d'éventail*, was to change the destiny of North Africa.

For nearly three centuries the 'Regency' of Algiers had stagnated under Turkish misgovernment. At first the Porte had exercised fairly direct control over the territory which Barbarossa had so obligingly placed at its disposal, sending men and money for the service of the garrison, and supplying the country with a succession of Pashas from Constantinople who bled dry the coastal districts, and such parts of the hinterland as they were able at the moment to hold in subjection. In the seventeenth century, however, the Janissaries began to elect Deys of their own, and gradually they reduced the Sultan's representative to a mere figure-head who finally disappeared altogether. These Deys, who were not infrequently chosen from among the common soldiers, rarely died in their beds—and even more rarely deserved to do so.

The one constant, lucrative and ever-popular trade of the Algerine Turks was piracy, and their daring and impertinence, fostered by success, grew from year to year. Sporadic attempts were made by various European Powers to exterminate this band of thieves and gangsters; but so long as these Powers continued to quarrel among themselves, it was impossible to strike a decisive blow. England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland and the Italian Principalities all tried, and all failed to put an end to what was admittedly little more than a nuisance, but one on a considerable scale.

The expedition of the Emperor Charles V in 1541 was the first, and remained the most ambitious of these attempts. A few years earlier he had taught the Tunisians a sharp lesson and, confident of success, he now set sail with an armada of more than five hundred



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ships and nearly forty thousand men. He had waited until October, by which time he hoped that the main Ottoman fleet would be safely laid up for the winter in home waters. The army had been successfully landed, and the town of Algiers almost surrounded, when without warning a violent storm broke. On shore the Emperor's camp vanished in a sea of mud; men, tents and provisions were washed away; much of the powder which was saved was no longer usable. At sea the disaster was no less calamitous, and more than a hundred ships broke loose from their moorings to sink or founder upon the rocks, till the waves were littered with spars of wood and the bodies of horses and men. At dawn the following day the Turkish troops made a sortie and routed the miserable, shivering soldiers. A small body of horse alone held their ground, and even counter-attacked as far as the town where a Frenchman called Savignac (a Knight of Malta), seizing his dagger, plunged it into one of the thick wooden gates of the Bab Azoun crying: '*Nous reviendrons!*' But the Emperor had no choice; his position was hopeless; slowly and painfully he re-embarked what remained of his once proud army, leaving behind all his guns and equipment and his now useless provisions.

After this brilliant success against the finest soldiers in Europe, the insolence of 'the cruel pirates of Argier, that damned train, the scum of Africa'<sup>1</sup> knew no limits until the humiliation of Lepanto (1571). But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though the golden age of piracy was past, the menace had by no means been suppressed; and the thousands of Christian slaves who languished in the *bagnios* of Algiers and Tunis and in the vast workshops of Moulay Ismaël at Mequinez, bore witness to the continuation of a state of affairs which was a disgrace to Europe. Desultory expeditions, mainly by the French, won nothing but temporary relief, and treaties were no sooner made than they were broken by the Turks. Two successive French consuls and a number of Christian slaves were fired from the mouth of a cannon by the Dey Mezzo Morto (1693 and 1698) in revenge for French bombardments and demands for indemnities, and on the latter occasion Admiral d'Estrées retaliated by decapitating seventeen influential Turks whom he had on board, and floating their corpses on a raft which was carried by the wind into the harbour. The brutality was not all on one side, as the Turkish galley-slaves at Marseilles and Genoa could testify.

<sup>1</sup> Marlowe: *Tamburlane I*, iii, iii.



THE DEY OF ALGIERS WATCHING THE FRENCH FLEET IN STORMY WEATHER

From Berbrugger; *Algérie historique*



One by one the nations of Europe had submitted to the indignity of paying an annual tribute in return for guarantees, rarely kept, of immunity from molestation; and to the United States belongs the honour of having first called the Corsairs' bluff by refusing to submit to the infamous levies which had been considered inevitable in Europe. Three expeditions (in 1803, 1805 and 1815) reduced Tripoli and Algiers to reason, and in 1816 Lord Exmouth at the head of an English fleet bombarded Algiers and liberated some three thousand slaves there and elsewhere in Barbary. Two years later, at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, it was decided to threaten the Dey with joint action by the European Powers who declared themselves 'irrevocably determined to put down piracy'. The Dey—a man named Hussein—remained unimpressed, and promised nothing; but the time was drawing near when the scourge of Christendom was to be annihilated for ever. An old prophecy foretold that Algiers would only fall to soldiers in red: and the soldiers in red were coming.

The affair of the *coup d'éventail*—so petty and insignificant in itself, so far-reaching in its ultimate ramifications—had its roots in international Jewry. Towards the end of the eighteenth century two Livornese Jews, Bacri and Busnach, had contrived to corner the whole of the Algerine export trade; but so artfully had they entangled their own interests with those of the Dey that their transactions acquired an international, rather than a private character. During the *Directoire* they had supplied vast quantities of corn to Southern France, and had been largely responsible for the provisioning of Napoleon's Egyptian expedition. As long as their figures were not challenged, they seemed in no hurry to be paid; but as a safeguard they had purchased protection in influential quarters in France, and in particular they had made a deal with Talleyrand. 'If the cripple weren't in my pocket, I shouldn't feel safe,' Bacri had written. 'The alliance made between the former Bishop of Autun and the Livornese Jews to hoodwink a Moslem sovereign was a modern variant of the crusade,' comments Julien.<sup>1</sup> The affair is too tangled to pursue here in all its details. After the Restoration the interrupted negotiations over the payment of the debt were resumed, and a commission finally reduced the sum outstanding from twenty-four to seven million francs. Bacri and Busnach were only interested in getting their own share, and

<sup>1</sup> Julien, Ch-André: *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord* (1931).

#### DESERT HAWK

the Dey, Hussein, (who had lost all grip of the situation) was left with the general impression that he was being swindled, without any clear idea as to how or by whom. He was no fool; but he was dealing with two extremely clever and unscrupulous crooks.

In 1815 a man named Deval had been appointed French Consul in Algiers. No more unsuitable agent could well have been chosen than this shifty Levantine whose reputation for shady transactions had become a byword from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, and who had been excluded from the Diplomatic Corps. Hussein suspected (no doubt correctly) that this man was hand in glove with the Jewish leeches, and had clamoured time and again to have him replaced; but the French Government persistently ignored his requests, and refused even to investigate the charges he brought against the consul.

On April 29, 1827, the Dey received Deval in audience. For our knowledge of what passed at this celebrated interview we are dependent upon the consul's own report, in which he took good care to appear in the role of a virtuous, long-suffering European patiently enduring the provocations and insults of a Barbarian despot. More probably the wily Levantine deliberately set out to make Hussein lose his temper. It is certain, however, that the Dey so far forgot himself as to strike the consul three times in the face with his fly-whisk—an innocuous little object of ivory tipped with peacocks' feathers. Not only was Deval none the worse for the assault, but he allowed the audience to continue. No doubt his 'epidermis had been rendered less sensitive by prolonged residence in the East',<sup>1</sup> for it was only on reflection, when he came to make out his report, that he grasped the extent of the insult. But in France the affair assumed a more threatening significance. French national honour had been affronted; the Dey must be made to apologize. There was much discussion as to what form this apology should take, but eventually it was decided that French flags were to be flown from the forts of Algiers while the Dey's representative boarded a French vessel in the harbour and tendered his regrets.

Now the position of the Dey was at the best of times precarious. No one knew better than Hussein, who had held the position for the almost unprecedented period of nine years, how far public opinion would let him go. He saw that it was impossible for him to submit to such humiliation. 'I'm surprised that the French haven't asked for my wife as well,' he said ironically to the Sardinian

<sup>1</sup> Le Marchant: *L'Europe et la Conquête d'Alger* (1913).

Consul who carried back his refusal. France immediately retaliated by ordering a blockade of the ports of the Regency—a costly and utterly ineffective reply which merely provoked Hussein to mirth. The old Turk, who in his youth had had some experience of French night-life, declared that the efforts of the fleet to trap his merchantmen were about as unproductive of result as the seductive attempts of the prostitutes at the doors of the Paris theatres, whose catch he estimated at not more than one in a hundred. When the wind blew a gale from the north, he would climb to the terrace above the Kasbah to enjoy the discomfiture of the patrol-vessels. ‘I fear that the fine young ladies of the Palais-Royal have a poor day for their promenade,’ he would remark to his ministers with a smile.

The idea of a land attack on Algiers was first put forward in the autumn of 1827, and though Charles X favoured the scheme it was turned down. ‘*C'est égal*,’ he murmured regretfully; ‘*c'eût été une belle chose de se présenter devant les Chambres les clefs d'Alger à la main*.’ After two years of indecision, during which the futility of the blockade became increasingly calamitous to French prestige, a new envoy, La Bretonnière, was sent to Algiers to extract any form of apology which would satisfy opinion at home. Hussein, now more confident than ever in his ability to resist attack, firmly refused to co-operate in restoring French self-respect, and confined himself to assurances that he had never intended to insult her honour. The disappointed envoy set sail from the harbour flying the flag of truce; but a contrary wind blew his ship into forbidden water within range of the coastal batteries. These immediately opened fire. La Bretonnière behaved with dignity and declined to reply with his own guns; but the episode still further increased the tension which existed between the two countries. Though Hussein punished the ringleaders, it was generally believed in France that he had approved, if not actually ordered the bombardment.

Polignac, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs in an unpopular government, was in favour of action, but uncertain as to the form it should take. It was at this juncture that a singular proposal reached the French government from Egypt. Mehemet Ali, who had completed his reorganization at home, was looking round for an opportunity to lay the foundations of an empire which would rival that of his nominal over-lord the Sultan of Turkey. In exchange for the gift of four ships of the line and the loan of twenty million francs, he now offered to attack Algiers and to humble the

pride of Hussein. It may at first sight seem astonishing that the suggestion was seriously considered in France; but friction in the Ottoman Empire suited Polignac's European policy, and he warmly applauded the idea. France, he said, could not soil her hands by fighting Barbarians. Thus, in spite of strong opposition from certain quarters, it was announced in January, 1830, that France had decided to avenge her honour vicariously.

The public declaration was met on all sides with anger and ridicule. The French Press greeted it with open derision; military authorities emphasized the immense difficulties of the thirteen-hundred-mile march through Libya and Tunisia; Great Britain protested strongly against a campaign which might well end in the formation of an Arab Empire surpassing that of her old client the Sultan of Turkey. Even Russia, whose approval had been expected, scouted the idea with disdain. Diplomatic machinery was immediately set in motion. Great Britain urged the Sultan to withhold permission from his unruly vassal Mehemet Ali, and herself threatened the latter with wrath to come if he persisted. France began to waver; it was perhaps not too late to withdraw from an enterprise which appeared daily more ludicrous and less desirable; she decided to take off her gloves and risk soiling her hands. On February 7 orders were given for the organization of military and naval forces to attack Algiers.

Great Britain, when she saw the scale of the preparations, became genuinely alarmed. After having accorded asylum to the *émigrés*, she considered that she had a right to lend a guiding hand to French foreign policy; and France had already shown a dangerous inclination, both in Greece and in Spain, to go her own way. If it was undesirable that Mehemet Ali should carve out an empire for himself on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, it was still more undesirable that France should do so. There is something curiously unattractive about the colonial enterprises of one's neighbours. During the early spring a battle of wits ensued between London and Paris. While Britain clamoured for written assurance that no permanent occupation was contemplated, France contrived to remain amiable but irritatingly vague. Verbal assurances she gave repeatedly; but on one excuse or another she eluded all attempts to be tied down on paper. She intended, she said, to free Europe once and for all from the scourge of piracy; if the Dey were overthrown, she would, of course, concert with her European allies over the future of the Regency.

## ALGIERS

The Algerian campaign, it must be confessed, was in reality mainly intended to divert attention from the unpopularity of the government's home policy, and to bolster up the waning prestige of the throne. 'The real war will begin when we get back,' a French brigadier remarked shrewdly. The diversion delayed, though it could not prevent the catastrophe; but while it lasted, it served to keep the Press and the public pleasantly distracted. The Liberal papers shouted their disapproval; they blackguarded Polignac, who was invariably proved in the wrong, whatever line he took; they accused General de Bourmont, who had been chosen to lead the expedition, of imagining himself to be a second Bonaparte; they demonstrated conclusively that the campaign was foredoomed to failure; they quoted hair-raising accounts of the Regency—a land of 'deserts where the lion, the jackal and the hyena roar, where the boa-constrictor crawls and the deadly scorpion lurks in the richest houses; where in summer the locusts, like a plague of Egypt, surge forward as irresistably as the armies of Gengis Khan and devour everything, even the bark of the trees . . .' By way of attraction there seemed little to offer but 'attar of roses and the bestial poetry of opium'. But in spite of opposition, preparations went ahead rapidly. The eight months originally thought necessary were reduced, first to six, then to three, in order to avoid repeating Charles V's mistake of campaigning in the autumn.

The combined operations were to be made on a vast scale, and nothing was to be left to chance. The fleet was to consist of eleven ships of the line, twenty-four frigates and more than sixty corvettes and brigs, while nearly three hundred and fifty merchantmen and one hundred and fifty smaller craft were to be used in the convoys. For the first time a few steamships were to be tried. The military strength comprised thirty thousand infantry and five hundred cavalry. Besides a strong supply of artillery and siege guns, room had to be found on board for a huge amount of equipment, five million cartridges, two hundred and fifty tons of powder, and two months' rations for forty thousand men and four thousand horses and mules.

In France the public gradually became resigned to the new crusade. Gifts and suggestions, not always of a very helpful nature, poured in from well-meaning enthusiasts. Margat, the Royal Aeronaut, presented a captive balloon (which, though it never actually took the air, was to look quite decorative in fanciful

pictures of the campaign); a Parisian merchant was ready to equip a corps of youthful 'desert scouts' at his own expense; an inventor arrived with a twelve-pound portable redoubt which could be erected in seven minutes; another had designed an entirely new system of signalling with bugles. Le Sieur Porcellague, an enterprising Marscilles café proprietor, applied for permission to follow the fleet with a floating hotel from which, for sixteen francs a day, the curious might observe in comfort the disembarkation of the mighty army, and even, if it proved feasible, certain phases of the subsequent campaign. Lord Cochrane, the famous admiral and *condottiere*, was prepared (for the paltry sum of five million francs) to reveal the secrets of a 'truly infernal' incendiary machine. But he was known to be eccentric: in 1815 he had made a personal declaration of war on the Dey, though lack of funds, he admitted, had prevented him from following the matter up. Sidney Smith, gallant defender of Acre, called at the Ministry of Marine with a basketful of toy ships, horses, cannon and waggons; demonstrated a highly original plan for the disembarkation of the troops; and was deeply offended when it was not accepted.

The opposition newspapers set out, of course, to ridicule the expedition—and, indeed, it was not difficult to do so. Painted cardboard soldiers, they declared, were being manufactured by the thousand for use in mock ambuses. They appealed to dog-lovers to lend their pets to test whether the Arabs had poisoned the wells. Their pages were flooded with cartoons in which cretinous-looking French soldiers figured in embarrassing harem situations, of drawings showing devices (such as a patent parasol for attaching to the bayonet) for mitigating the severity of the climate.

While England, who was not disposed to go to war, watched the immense preparations with ill-humoured resignation, Hussein began to get seriously alarmed. He had expected, at the most, another bombardment; he now saw himself faced with the prospect of a full-scale invasion. Sending his son-in-law, Ibrahim, to preach the *jihad*, he hastily summoned the best of his militia from Oran and Constantine, announced a reward of one hundred francs for every French head brought in, and awaited the worst. By proclaiming a holy war against the Christians, he was able to enlist the services of a number of those Arabs and Kabyles who in normal times resented his tyrannical rule, and his army soon numbered sixty thousand men, only a third of whom, however, carried fire-arms. But an appeal to the neighbouring Barbary states

elicited nothing more tangible in the way of support than prayers and expressions of sympathy. Morocco, which was not under Turkish rule, offered to take a benevolent but passive interest in the proceedings; Tunis decided to remain frankly neutral. Tripoli maintained that her hands were tied by a threat of invasion from Egypt. She was convinced, she said, that no harm could come to a cause as good as Hussein's, and added encouragingly that a Tripolitanian *marabout* had predicted the utter annihilation of the French armies. She only wished she were in a position to be of help. The Dey swallowed this cold comfort as best he could, and commended his armies to the care of Allah and the commander-in-chief Ibrahim. Day after day Hussein could be seen walking restlessly up and down the terrace of his palace, anxiously scanning the horizon with an antiquated spyglass for the sight of a French sail.

On April 1, Admiral Duperré, in command of the French fleet, reached Toulon, where the freshly-painted ships 'like a meadow enamelled with flowers hung in many coloured garlands' lay at anchor in the calm waters of the Mediterranean. Soon afterwards General de Bourmont arrived at Marseilles, where he was welcomed by fifty tambourine players who sang in his honour a neat adaptation of a chorus from *Oedipus*:

'Alger ouvrira ses portes  
A vos cohortes . . .'

But the soldiers had not forgotten that de Bourmont had deserted to the enemy three days before Waterloo, and a very different song could be heard round the camp-fires at night:

'Alger est loin de Waterloo,  
On ne déserte pas sur l'eau;  
De notre général Bourmont  
Ne craignons point la trahison.'

Preparations had been going ahead at high speed. Manœuvres and military exercises were held; disembarkation was rehearsed. Then the Dauphin arrived to see the troops off. He, too, received a great ovation and was, for once, almost affable; but as usual he found something to spoil his pleasure: 'I doubt whether there are many voters among those who welcome me so warmly,' he

remarked bitterly—a foreboding soon to be justified. At Toulon the thunderous salvos of the royal salute were experienced by a number of enterprising ladies who, in the comfort of the admiral's cabin, professed themselves delightfully deafened by the simultaneous discharge of sixty big guns.

In the bright sunlight of these May mornings the whole venture wore the aspect of a vast, care-free pageant. Official painters lugged their easels and canvasses on board; representatives of foreign powers, who had joined the expedition to see the fun, strutted about in gay, outlandish uniforms; brave Captain Mansell, an English sailor who had taken part in Exmouth's bombardment of Algiers in 1816 and who had got permission to pay off an old score against the Turks, arrived in something surprisingly like fancy-dress and firmly refused to be parted from his sixteenth century claymore. But was it a pageant? Was it a crusade? Was the French bully about to knock down the little Turk for an imagined insult? Was it, after all, a mere diversion from troubles at home? Or was the mighty power of France consciously reaching out to snatch the first few acres of its Great North African Empire?<sup>1</sup> One thing is certain—that no one at the time foresaw the full consequences of this light-hearted expedition against the old pirate stronghold of Algiers, and that not even Polignac himself had any clear notion of what should be done with the Regency when victory had been won.

There were the usual delays—first the wind was too strong, then there was none at all. On board the admiral's flagship, Duperré and de Bourmont (whose politics were of different shades) glared at one another suspiciously across the dinner-table, while the general derived some comfort from a secret document in his pocket which gave him supreme command over the expedition in the event of a serious divergence between naval and military policy. At last, on May 25, the first ships of the armada sailed slowly out of Toulon harbour.

The African coast was already in sight when bad weather set in, and the fleet was obliged to return to Palma, in the Balearic Isles, which had conveniently been placed at the disposal of the French by the Spanish Government. By now four of the seven steamships had broken down. Two had become totally useless, and two others, whose cargoes were of vital importance, were, in due course,

<sup>1</sup> It should, perhaps, be mentioned that the French already ruled over some territory in Senegal.

obliged to continue the voyage under the ignominious tow of sailing vessels. For over a week the weather remained impossible. De Bourmont spent his enforced leisure compiling an order of the day: 'The army, which contrary winds had carried away from the African shore, will soon be approaching it. My men are impatient to fight, and soon their wishes will be realized. The Commander-in-Chief has just learnt that immense hordes of irregular cavalry await us on the shore, ready to protect their front with thousands of camels. French soldiers will be no more alarmed by the appearance of these animals than they will be intimidated by the number of their opponents . . .'

On June 10 it became possible to leave harbour, and four days later, as dawn broke, the lifting mist suddenly revealed the white amphitheatre of Algiers spread out on the horizon.

To the cries of '*Vive le roi!*' the fleet paraded past the town, while the dumbfounded Turks watched from their ramparts the never-ending procession of ships sailing leisurely to westwards.

The plan of campaign had been based upon the secret report made by a French agent—a man named Boutin—in 1808. Algiers, strongly protected from the sea, was known to be relatively weakly defended on the land side, and de Bourmont proposed to disembark his army near the peninsula of Sidi Ferruch and to attack the city from the west. Fort L'Empereur, a castle on the outskirts of the town on the site of Charles V's encampment, presented the only serious obstacle. Ibrahim, whose spies had kept him informed of the intention of the French, purposed to let the invaders land, and then throw them back into the sea. His decision proved to be a fatal strategic error.

Disembarkation began at midnight on June 13-14. Several authors have been at pains to describe the eerie silence which prevailed as the troops waded from the flat-bottomed landing-craft on to the beach; but Captain Rozet, who was present, relates that 'soldiers and sailors made a hideous uproar'. Their enthusiasm was terrific. A sixty-eight-year-old colonel, in his anxiety to be the first man ashore, jumped too soon into the water and had to be rescued from drowning. The landing was made almost without opposition, and during the first few days there was little to report beyond a few skirmishes with stray detachments of Turkish cavalry who galloped to within range of the French lines, discharged their rifles and, turning about, disappeared like lightning into the shrub. It was a method of attack which the French were soon to come to

know only too well. But these 'tip and run' raids (as we should call them to-day) struck terror into the hearts of the French soldiers, and more than once they lost their heads.

At one moment it seemed probable that the disaster of Charles V's expedition was about to be re-enacted. Before most of the equipment had been landed, a tremendous storm broke. To lighten the ships, a great deal of the stores had to be thrown into the sea; but the water-tight cases in which they had been packed preserved them from damage, and they were later rescued from the beach. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the hurricane abated.

The battle which virtually decided the fate of Algiers was fought on June 19 on the heights of Staoüeli where Ibrahim had massed his armies. The Turkish plan of attack was not without merit. Ibrahim had calculated that the French left flank, which had taken up its position on ground unfavourable for defence, was the most vulnerable point in the enemy's line. Against this he launched at dawn a sudden and heavy attack with his best troops. A light mist favoured his design. The French at first recoiled from the shock, and for a moment their position was critical; but the timely arrival of reserves saved the situation. Towards seven o'clock the mist lifted, and as the morning sun flashed from the golden spheres which crowned the tents of the Turkish chiefs, de Bourmont threw in his main forces. Stiff fighting followed, and at first the issue was in doubt; but by eleven o'clock the Turkish batteries had been silenced, and before long the whole camp was in French hands. Turkish casualties, always difficult to gauge with accuracy, were estimated at four thousand, while the French suffered fifty-seven men killed and nearly five hundred wounded. The booty was appreciable, for besides guns and mortars, and a considerable sum of silver which was found in the paymaster's tent, it included large quantities of stores and livestock. The food provided a pleasant change in the monotonous diet of the French soldiers, while the antics of a number of camels afforded them impromptu entertainment.

The first news of the battle reached Algiers during the course of the morning. A dispatch-rider, who had left the battle-field while the Turks were forcing back the French left wing, announced a great Turkish victory and assured the Dey that by nightfall the enemy would be exterminated. The Turkish element in the town was wildly enthusiastic; yet Hussein's pleasure was momentarily clouded: the amount of the reward for French heads had

been steadily falling, but he saw the extermination of the French would still involve him in considerable expense. He hastily issued orders that the bearers of these bloody trophies would in future be recompensed by having their names inscribed in a special Book of Honour. Presently the vanguard of fugitives began to straggle in, and before nightfall the streets of Algiers were filled with the remnants of the routed army. The earlier rejoicing gave way to panic.

De Bourmont has been criticized for not following up his victory by an immediate attack on Algiers itself. Certainly the Turks expected him to do so, and attributing his delay to fear, took new heart. But the siege artillery, which had been following in another convoy, had been delayed, and he considered the risk of operating without it to be unjustifiable. During the next fortnight, while the French improved the road between Sidi Ferruch and Staoueli, the Turkish forces were regrouped and continuously harassed them; but except for an engagement at Sidi Khalcf, there was no clash which could be described as a battle. Here Amédée de Bourmont, one of the four sons of the Commander-in-Chief who had accompanied him to Africa, was killed.

The French soldiers grumbled incessantly at what they considered a pointless delay. The excessive heat, which in the excitement of battle had passed almost unnoticed, now seemed intolerable to men condemned to wear rigid uniforms, tight tunics, closely-buttoned collars and heavy shakos; the interminable polishing of buttons, the strict enforcement of barrack-square spruceness, appeared doubly futile under the tyranny of the African sun. The regulation equipment, bulky and unserviceable, was soon made even heavier by loot—‘copper basins, large pipes, native stuffs and clothes’. One infantryman had become the proud possessor of a miniature menagerie consisting of an Arab horse, a large monkey, and a parrot, from which he refused to be separated. Discipline grew lax. Salt meat created thirsts which were assuaged at the nearest stream, and dysentery resulted. Dead bodies, inadequately buried, infected the air.

At last, on June 29, the siege artillery was ready, and the advance began along the whole line. At the start all went smoothly; then, suddenly, a mishap occurred which might have proved fatal to the whole campaign: a thick mist, covering the plain, was mistaken in the morning light for the sea. Boutin’s map must be wrong: the army had advanced beyond Algiers. De Bourmont

immediately ordered a change of direction left, a movement which threw his troops into utter confusion. Had the Turks attacked at this moment, the French would probably have sustained a crushing defeat; but they did not grasp their opportunity, and de Bourmont was able to rally his men.

Fort l'Empereur, the key to Algiers, was a large and strongly-fortified rectangular castle standing a little way from the town on a hill some seven hundred feet above sea-level. On July 4, before dawn, the final attack began. The Turks, under El Khaznadji, resisted stubbornly, repairing the breaches in the walls as best they could. But the French artillery was too powerful, and by ten o'clock the position of the defenders had become hopeless. Suddenly a tremendous explosion rocked the fortress; the besieged, forced to abandon the castle, had fired the powder-dump. Fort l'Empereur had fallen.

Algiers was now powerless to resist; yet Hussein was at first under the impression that he could dictate his own terms of surrender, and despatched his secretary, Mustapha, to parley with de Bourmont. His puerile offer—to pay the cost of the war and to confirm the French trading privileges—could hardly hope to meet with acceptance after four hundred Frenchmen had been killed and two thousand more wounded. It was a day of negotiations. Two influential Moors, representatives of the town and the divan, were the next to arrive at the French camp, with the offer of the Dey's head in reparation for his misdeeds: they were summarily dismissed. Then Mustapha came back in company with the British consul, and received from de Bourmont the French terms—the immediate capitulation of the town and its forts. In return, the Dey was to be allowed to embark with his harem and his belongings for any port he chose; the wives and property of the inhabitants of Algiers were to be respected, and the free exercise of the Mohammedan religion permitted. Finally, that there might be no trickery, the senior interpreter to the French army—a nervous little Levantine Jew named Bracewitz—was dispatched to the Kasbah to obtain the Dey's signature. It was an alarming interview, and daggers and *yataghans* flashed dangerously near the head of the poor interpreter; but in the end Hussein agreed to sign. What else could he do? The strain, however, proved too much for Bracewitz: when he returned to the French camp he took to his bed, and within a fortnight he was dead.

At noon on July 5 de Bourmont, accompanied by his staff and a squadron of cavalry and artillery, made his entry into the town at the head of the 6th Infantry Regiment, to the rousing strains of Signor Rossini's latest success—'William Tell'. The magnificence of the spectacle was somewhat marred by the narrowness of the street which led to the Kasbah. More than once the axles of the guns became engaged in the masonry of the houses, whose walls collapsed into the road, and the procession was brought to a standstill while the debris was being cleared away by the sappers. But the hearts of the victors were light. The band was playing; the lances and shakos of the cavalry, festooned with sprays of pink oleander, added further brilliance to the red and blue of the uniforms; the strip of sky, framed between the overhanging balconies, was a cloudless blue . . . With lively curiosity the soldiers observed the unfamiliar scene—Moorish tradesmen sitting by their closed booths, too apathetic even to turn their heads as the conquerors passed; veiled women, mere shapeless bundles of humanity and disappointingly unlike the voluptuous odalisks of fiction; the glimpse of a fountained courtyard through the chink of a door; black eyes half seen for a moment behind the little latticed windows of houses designed to keep the heat out and the women in.

At the approach of the soldiers, the Dey, seized with sudden panic, fled from the Kasbah to his town house (which he had never dared to occupy), followed by his servants and black slaves who carried with them everything on which they could lay hands. The streets were soon littered with silks, bric-à-brac, and cheap oriental jewellery dropped in the course of their hurried flight.

Now the Kasbah stood almost empty—a frowning shell. From the embrasures in the whitewashed battlements the unmanned guns with their vermillion-painted mouths pointed harmlessly at the oncoming soldiers; splashing fountains played idly in the jasmine-scented courtyard where a solitary figure sat lost in thought, immobile as a statue—El Khaznadji, defender of Fort l'Empereur and treasurer of Hussein.

It was a scene from the Arabian Nights which confronted the French officers who followed El Khaznadji into the vaults of the Kasbah. Boxes filled to overflowing with ingots of gold and silver, piles of gold coins, of jewellery and plate lay in a wild disorder—nearly fifty million francs' worth, and more than enough to pay for the whole cost of the expedition. That, at least, was the amount officially recovered; but there seems little doubt that the

superior officers indulged in a good deal of private looting. ‘The rareties of the Dey’s treasure were nearly all stolen. The splendid vases, the rich arms—many of them belonging to the best period of Spain, carried off by the pirates, and buried in the vaults of the Kasbah—were squandered away: its rich plate, of considerable artistic value, was melted and coined. It is believed in Algiers that many superior officers, generals, and persons of the military household of Marshal Bourmont, had taken part in these embezzlements. Inquest was afterwards made into the matter by a commission, but the report has never been published. Even the cash of the Kasbah was said not to have reached France without serious defalcation.’<sup>1</sup>

While their officers were so pleasantly employed, it is hardly surprising that the private soldiers indulged in treasure-hunts of their own. With the exception of the Kasbah, property in Algiers seems—for the time being, at any rate—to have been respected; but during the next fortnight a great deal of damage was done in the outlying districts. It was then that many of the finest gardens and villas were wantonly destroyed. Since nobody knew whether Algiers would be retained, nobody cared for its future; and the officers, therefore, remained indifferent when the first palms and orange-trees were felled by the soldiers for their camp-fires. Gangs of looters broke into the neat villas, deserted by their frightened inhabitants; they tore down even the walls in the hope of finding hidden treasure. ‘The traces of this vandalism,’ wrote Pulszky twenty-five years later, ‘are not yet all obliterated . . .’

On July 10, at dusk, Hussein set sail in the *Jeanne d’Arc*, bound for Naples. A large cabin had been specially constructed in the centre of the ship to accommodate the fallen monarch and his women. Carpenters had been working against time to get this ready, and it may have been accidentally that they had left a hole in one of the partitions through which, as the ship sailed out of the harbour, leering French sailors took turns to study the unveiled beauties of the Dey’s harem.

<sup>1</sup> Pulszky, Francis: *The Tricolor on the Atlas* (1854). Pellissier de Reynaud and others, while admitting the looting, deny that the money was stolen.

## CHAPTER II

### ABD EL KADER

WE must now turn back to the spring of 1808.

In Europe the armies of France were tramping through Spain, while Napoleon, far from having accepted Trafalgar as a death-blow to his dreams of an empire overseas, was planning the construction of a new fleet. 'I must have ships,' he wrote, 'for I intend striking a heavy blow towards the end of the season'; and he confessed that the constant aim of his policy was the control of the Mediterranean. While Moslem eyes from Tangier to Tripoli gazed with mild amusement at the unedifying spectacle of civil war in Christendom, the French agent Boutin was secretly mapping the fortifications of Algiers and reporting to his chief that the town could best be attacked by a landing made at Sidi Ferruch, a small peninsula some twelve miles to the west of it.

That same spring, while the guns of Paris were firing salutes to celebrate the birth of a son to Queen Hortense, there occurred in the Regency of Algiers an inconspicuous event which was none the less to have a far-reaching effect on the future of North Africa —a boy was born in a small settlement called the Guetna<sup>1</sup> of Oued el Hammam, near Mascara. Of these two children, one was to be known to history as Napoléon III; the other was Abd el Kader, whose name was one day to ring through Barbary as a clarion call against French aggression. How different their destinies appeared, and how unlikely it seemed that Fate would one day bring them together. Yet on an October afternoon more than forty years later the Arab chieftain and the Prince-President, both of whom had come to know the bitterness of confinement, were to meet, as liberator and liberated, within the massive ramparts of the Château of Amboise.

Mahi ed Din, Abd el Kader's father, claimed a rather uncertain descent from the Prophet; but there can be no doubt as to the austerity of his private life, nor of the respect in which he was held, not only by the tribe among whom he lived (the Hachem)

<sup>1</sup>Plural of *guitoun*, a tent.

but throughout a considerable part of the Province of Oran. ‘He was a man of God’ his son said later of him; ‘his chaplet was his rifle.’ He directed a flourishing *zaouia*—an institution not unlike a monastery, which combined the functions of a small religious university with that of a free hostel for all who demanded lodging in the name of God and of His Prophet. These *zaouias* received an annual income from taxation, but were mainly dependent upon voluntary contributions, a system which, as Morell<sup>1</sup> points out, naturally works better amongst a religious people than it would with us. Pilgrims before setting out for Mecca would visit the *zaouias* to receive the *marabout’s* blessing, and to make gifts in money and kind, part of which would be distributed among the sick and needy of the neighbourhood.

Mahi ed Din had four wives—the maximum allowed by Islam: Ourida, who bore him two sons, Si Mohammed Saïd and Si Mustapha; Zohra, the mother of Abd el Kader and of a girl named Khadidja; Fathma, by whom he had Si el Hossein; and Kheïra, mother of el Mortedi.

It would seem, if we could believe Debay,<sup>2</sup> that Nature gave more than one hint that Abd el Kader was no ordinary child. ‘According to vulgar report, his birth was accompanied by numerous prodigies: the flowers assumed hues of unwonted brightness, and exhaled yet rarer fragrance; bees concocted a sweeter honey; the sun burnt less fiercely during the dog-days; and the desert wind became still, as though stayed by the hand of the Omnipotent. A halo of azure flame surrounded his head for several minutes; and his mother, like a prophetess of old, cried: “This is the child whom the soothsayers foretold; Hachem-Cheraga, here is he whose coming you expected.”’

Abd el Kader seems to have been a robust child, though one of his biographers<sup>3</sup> speaks of a natural timidity which the boy soon overcame. Later, when he had grown into the bravest soldier in Algeria, Mahi ed Din would sometimes remind him teasingly of his childish fears. Lively, intelligent and good-looking, he soon became his father’s favourite. At the age of five he could read and write; at twelve he qualified as a *ta'leb* or graduate in the religious traditions of Islam; and by the time he was fourteen he knew the Koran by heart. For some time past he had been taking

<sup>1</sup> Morell, J. R.: *Algeria* (1854).

<sup>2</sup> Debay, A.: *Biographie d’Abd el Kader* (1845).

<sup>3</sup> Churchill, Col. C. H.: *Life of Abd el Kader* (1867).

a class in the family mosque, and helping his father in his work. His one ambition was to be a great *marabout*.

But he was not merely an intellectual; he was a fine *athlete* and a brilliant horseman as well. In the *fantasias* or mock-battles so beloved by the Arabs, he would urge his black steed to the gallop and fire accurately as he stood up in the saddle. While his companions dressed as ostentatiously as they could afford, Abd el Kader was conspicuous by the simplicity of his white *burnous*. Only his weapons were richly and elaborately decorated: 'a long Tunisian musket inlaid with silver; pistols encrusted with mother-of-pearl and coral; and a Damascus blade encased in a sheath of silver gilt'.

In appearance he was rather below medium height, compactly built, and remarkable for his beauty even in a country where good looks are the rule rather than the exception. 'His countenance, of the purest classic mould, was singularly attractive from its expressive and yet almost feminine beauty. His nose—middling-sized and delicately shaped—a pleasing mean between the Grecian and the Roman type; his lips, finely chiselled and slightly compressed, bespoke dignified reserve and firmness of purpose; while large, lustrous hazel eyes beamed from beneath a massive forehead of marble whiteness with subdued and melancholy softness, or flashed with the rays of genius and intelligence.'<sup>1</sup>

Abd el Kader's education had been entrusted to a scholarly old *kadi* from Arzew, who had given him, along with his religious schooling, a working knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and geography, as well as a smattering of information about the state of affairs in Europe. But soon after the boy had reached the age of fourteen, his father decided to widen his outlook by sending him to a school in Oran where, side by side with the sons of high Turkish officials, he could make a fuller study of Islamic literature. The experiment was not a success. The sensitive, deeply religious youth, brought up in the pious surroundings of the family *zaouia*, suddenly found himself plunged into the vicious life of a big city. He saw with disgust the bullying, loose-living Turks who treated the native population with contempt; he observed their conceited swaggering in the streets and their apathy in matters of religious observance. Within a year he was home again. He had learned one thing at Oran—to hate the Turks as fiercely as he hated the Christians, for he saw in the former not only the oppressors of his people but the enemies of his faith. Shortly after his return he

<sup>1</sup> Churchill.

was married to Lalla Kheïra, daughter of Sidi Ali bou Taleb, his father's brother.

For some time past there had been circulating in the Province of Oran a prophecy that one day the child of a woman named Zohra would become Sultan of North Africa. The credulous Arabs were ready to put faith in any prediction which gave them hope of an end to Turkish tyranny, and before long it was almost equally widely believed that the prophecy referred to Abd el Kader. This was reported to Hassan, *Bey* or Governor of the Eastern Province, in his palace at Oran. Hassan was uneasy; there was always discontent in the west, and he knew that Mahi ed Din and his family had a strong following among the Arabs round Mascara. When shortly afterwards the Turkish garrison in that town was unsuccessfully attacked by some tribesmen from the south, Hassan, who did not dare to denounce Mahi ed Din directly, accused his brother Ali bou Taleb of complicity in the plot. Ali had probably not been in any way involved, but he took safety in flight; and Mahi ed Din, although he declined to adopt a procedure so suggestive of guilt, began to look round for a suitable excuse to leave the country until things should have quieted down. A pilgrimage to Mecca met his requirements exactly.

Mahi ed Din had, of course, been to Mecca before; but the time had arrived when his son might also be expected to win the coveted title of *Hadj*, and this provided him with a pretext. News soon spread among the Hachem that the great *marabout* was making preparations for the journey, and many seized the opportunity to accompany the leader whose mere presence would enhance the virtue of the pilgrimage. But to Hassan the *marabout*'s growing popularity was intensely irritating. There was no way of telling whether this ever-increasing rabble of pilgrims was not in reality an army which had designs on Oran. He felt that he would sleep more soundly in his bed if the holy man were safe under lock and key. Before the caravan reached the river Chélib, a strong detachment of cavalry suddenly bore down upon it, seized Mahi ed Din and Abd el Kader, and carried them off to Oran.

They were not flung into jail, but lodged in comparative comfort in the house of a Moorish merchant. The house, however, was guarded day and night, and father and son were virtually prisoners. Here they might have been kept indefinitely, had not it been for the energy and persistence of Mustapha ben Ismaël and other of the *Makhzen* chiefs, or chiefs of tribes who collaborated



"NOUS CIVILISERONS CES GAILLARDS—LA  
Lithograph by Raffet

(Photo Plan)



with the Turks. Mustapha ingratiated himself with the mother and wife of Hassan, appealed to his piety, almost convinced him by argument of the good intentions of the two pilgrims, and finally provided the incontrovertible proof in the form of a few well-chosen gifts. The Bey pronounced himself satisfied, and released the prisoners on condition that they set out for Mecca at once. They wished for nothing better; and in the late autumn of 1816 the two pilgrims passed by land to Tunis, to join in due course the Moorish caravan which the trading-brig *Notre Dame de la Conception* was carrying to Egypt. The voyage was stormy, and once they were obliged to put back to port; but a fortnight after leaving Tunis a second time they reached Alexandria, and continued the journey overland to Cairo.

Here it was not the sacred mosques nor the broad, sparkling Nile which most attracted Abd el Kader: the figure of Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, deeply impressed him and continued to hold his attention. Mehemet Ali presented at that time the unique spectacle of an oriental despot apparently attempting to reform his country by European methods. That this was but a false dawn, none at that time could tell; and it was the memory of this endeavour which stirred in Abd el Kader when later he tried to organize his own kingdom on progressive lines.

Summer had come, and from the four corners of Islam the pilgrim caravans were converging upon the Holy City. From Baghdad marched the Persian caravan with weary steps but joyful hearts across the pitiless, stony plateaux of Central Arabia; Syrian pilgrims from the north had passed beyond Damascus and beyond Ma'an, and now shaped their course from well to well among the barren rocks of Moab; from Cairo, with the Egyptian caravan, came the new carpet to cover the Kaabah; pilgrims from India and the further east had sailed to Yemen, where those who would not wait for the trade winds to carry them to Jeddah, joined the overland caravans; pilgrims from Tunis, Tripoli and the western outposts of Islam sailed from Suez, or, crossing the Sinai Peninsula, followed the Red Sea coast; with the Nejd caravan came the unorthodox Wahhabis; with the Hail, the Bedouins; with the Chaldæan, Arabs and Persians. By day the endless columns advanced over burning rock and sand. By night thousands of fires burnt brightly in desert camps; and before dawn, as the signal gun sounded, the long trains set out again by the light of torches in order to make the first stages before the midday heat made marching intolerable.

To Abd el Kader, who accompanied the Moorish caravan, the experience was new and tremendous. He was about to perform the most sacred duty enjoined by the Prophet. We can imagine how eagerly he strained his eyes to catch the first glimpse of the Holy City, and with what fervour he performed there the various ceremonies connected with the pilgrimage.

Before reaching Mecca, it was customary for the pilgrim to exchange his travelling clothes for the *ihram*—a white garment without seam. On entering the city he first proceeded to engage the services of a guide whose business it was to instruct him in the customary prayers and ceremonies, and together the two passed under the Arch of Salvation into the court of the great Mosque. The scene has often been described, and every pilgrim must have heard tell of it from the lips of *hadji* in the far lands from which he had come; yet the spectacle, the goal of so many months, perhaps, of weary journeying, seldom failed to make a profound impression on the new-comer. Here was paradise on earth. The vast colonnaded amphitheatre lay crouching in a hollow, over-topped by the Meccan hills. In the centre stood the Kaabah—the House of God—covered from top to bottom with a black pall, round which swarmed the crowd of worshippers—Arabs, Moors, hysterical Wahhabis from Nejd, African Negroes, Persians, Turks, Afghans, Indians, Javanese even, and Tartars and Bokharans from Central Asia.

But, just as the festival of Christmas is variously celebrated in Christian lands by acts of simple piety or by exhibitions of gluttony and mere self-indulgence, so the Mecca pilgrimage could show its blacker side. Many people came there solely for purposes of trade; and since slaves, of all bartered wares, were the most lucrative, Mecca had become the undisputed centre of the slave-trade. Wine, forbidden by the Prophet, could be bought in many of the coffee-houses. The very court of the Mosque was used by merchants to discuss their business; dates and coffee were sold there, and barbers plied their trade; groups gathered together under its colonnades to gossip; it was used as a short cut by porters carrying luggage across the town; nameless indecencies were committed within its walls. Yet at the hours of prayer a spirit of holiness returned. The simple, devout Arab from the *guetna* must have often reflected upon these incomprehensible inconsistencies.

On entering the court the pilgrim hastened to perform the *tawaf*, a ceremony which consisted of walking seven times round

the Kaabah. He then kissed the Black Stone, and drank the brackish Zem Zem water, which was also sprinkled upon him till his sins fell from him like dust. There followed the *sai*—the running seven times along the street joining two sacred hills which lay on the outskirts of the town. During the first week the Mosque was constantly visited, not only by day, but also at night when thousands of lamps flickered in the velvet darkness, and a cool breeze—the beating of wings, it was said, of the angels who guarded the Mosque—stirred in the court and fluttered the black covering of the Kaabah.

On the eighth day there was a general exodus from Mecca for the central event of the pilgrimage—the sermon on Mount Arafat. The Syrian caravan led the way, followed by the Egyptian, each preceded by a camel bearing a *Mahmil*, or litter, with gay trappings of green and gold, while the lesser caravans and the inhabitants of Mecca brought up the rear. The immense procession of pilgrims, winding along the valleys between burning, lifeless rocks, chanted the Koran, shouted, cursed or wrangled—each as the spirit moved him—till, towards evening, the valley widened and Arafat was reached. Here a great market had been installed, and soon a sea of tents and glimmering camp-fires sprang up around it. The coffee-houses were besieged by thirsty customers, and all night long pandemonium reigned—hand-clapping and drums, shouting and praying, the neighing of horses, the roaring of camels and the braying of asses, mixed with the raucous yelling of the coffee-house keepers and the despairing cries of belated pilgrims vainly searching for their own encampment.

On the following afternoon the sermon was delivered. The preacher, on camel-back and shaded by green standards fringed with gold and silver which were carried by Negroes, accompanied the Sharif of Mecca to the summit of the hill, on the slopes of which, and far into the valley, spread the struggling mass of pilgrims. Some in ecstasy sobbed and cried, and shouts of *Labbayk*—‘I am here’—drowned the voice of the preacher; others, bored by the interminable, inaudible monotony of the sermon, yawned and stamped their feet with impatience, or escaped to the coffee-houses and the gambling and smoking which continued without abatement even at this the culminating moment of the pilgrimage.

At last it was over, and the mad stampede into the plain began. This was always the most disorderly, the most dangerous moment of all, Burton tells us. ‘Every man urged his beast with might and

main; the plain bristled with tent-pegs, litters were crushed, pedestrians were trampled, camels were overthrown, single combats with sticks and other weapons took place; here a woman, there a child, and there an animal, were lost; it was a chaotic confusion.' To the general commotion were added the indiscriminate firing of guns, the blaze of rockets whose sticks fell upon the heads of the crowd, and the jangle and blare of martial music.

The night was spent at Muzdalifah, where pebbles were collected and bound in the *ihram*; and next day the journey was continued to Muna, a village half-way between Arafat and Mecca. Here, according to tradition, Satan had appeared to Abraham who, on the advice of an archangel, repulsed him with volleys of small stones. To commemorate this, three days were spent in stoning the 'devil'—three rugged buttresses of granite—and the nights, as usual; in the firing of guns and rockets. Next came the slaughter of sheep in memory of Abraham's sacrifice, after which the *ihram* could be discarded and the head shaved, a large number of barbers coming to Muna for the latter purpose. The pilgrim then returned to Mecca to perform the last rite, the *omrah* or little pilgrimage to a mosque which lay about three miles from the city.

Most of the pilgrims now returned to their homes, but Mahi ed Din and his son separated themselves from the Moorish caravan and set out for Medina. The 'visitation' of Medina, as it was called, was nowhere enjoined by Mohammed, but it was a meritorious action performed by those who had the leisure; and near the green-domed *hujra* where the Prophet's ashes are said to lie, the devout pilgrims prostrated themselves and recited prayers which were one thousand times more efficacious than those offered up in any other place save Mecca itself. From Medina, probably by way of Damascus, they passed to Baghdad to visit the tomb of Sidi Abd el Kader el Djilani, the famous dervish in whose memory had been founded the most widely spread religious order in Islam—the Kadirîya. Abd el Kader at one time claimed the saint for an ancestor; but later in life he confessed to uncertainty on the subject, adding: 'Never inquire about a man's origin; rather examine his life, his deeds, his courage and character—then you will know what it is. If water drawn from a river is wholesome, pleasant and soft, then it comes from a pure source.'

Sidi Abd el Kader el Djilani, who lived in the twelfth century, surpassed even the Indian fakirs in austerity. He appears to have combined the temperament of St. Simeon Stylites with the poise

of a ballerina, while his catering arrangements were, according to one authority, modelled upon those of Elijah in the wilderness. The last fifty years of the saint's life were spent upon a mountain top, balanced upon the tip of one foot. For sustenance he seems to have depended upon the dew of heaven which dropped into his open mouth, and upon the devoted attentions of a starling. Some said that when El Djilani reached the age of a hundred this same bird transported him to paradise; but ten thousand of the faithful were prepared to testify to the personal intervention on this occasion of Mohammed who 'clove the ether, seized hold of the saintly man by his few white hairs and carried him up to heaven, leaving an immense trail of fire in his wake'. So writes Debay; and even the account of his more sober and scholarly biographer Mehmmed Ali Aini<sup>1</sup> is little less fantastic. El Djilani, he says, was first made aware of his divine mission by the prophetic utterances of an ox, followed by a vision of Mount Arafat. Thereafter he never looked back. After a preliminary period of intensive study he devoted his life to preaching and good works, and so successful was he in curing epilepsy that the disease altogether died out in Baghdad. At one period he lived for twelve months on water only; and for forty years he never slept, keeping himself awake at night by standing upon one foot and retaining his balance by means of a ring attached to the wall of his cell. He practised levitation, was able to make himself invisible, and was sometimes seen to be surrounded by a 'phosphorescent glow'. Flics never settled upon him; he got the better of dangerous snakes; and he acquired the capacity of being in seventy-one places at the same time. If his mother seemed unduly devoted to him, it must be remembered that he had in a previous incarnation (as a grey falcon) been instrumental in saving her life and honour while she was still a girl. When he preached, the more susceptible among his audience fainted at once, so moving was his rhetoric and so vivid his imagery. On such occasions, seventy thousand persons were able to hear him without difficulty, 'an undoubted miracle' Mehmmed Ali Aini reminds his readers, 'for at that time microphones and loud-speakers were not in use.' He had found time in the course of a busy life to become the father of forty-nine children, the last of whom, his son by an Abyssinian slave, was born when he was eighty-five years old. He died at the age of ninety.

The age of miracles—of the Arabian Nights and of Sidi Abd el

<sup>1</sup> *Un grand Saint de l'Islam, Abd -Al-Kadir Guilanî, (1938.)*

Kader el Djilani—survived in Baghdad for many centuries. It is dead now—killed by jerry-built factories, American cars and cheap spirits. The Prophet has been replaced by the profiteer; and the very locomotives, as they enter Baghdad station (East), whistle derisively and deposit their soot on the old dervish's tomb. But in 1828 the pilgrim who went to Baghdad expected to be vouch-safed a minor miracle at the very least. Mahi ed Din's father had three times visited the city, and each time he had been 'favoured with peculiar manifestations'. On this occasion Mahi ed Din had a vision. It was significant, if not very explicit: an angel appeared to him and, placing a key in his hand, commanded him to return to Oran. 'What shall I do with the key?' inquired Mahi ed Din. 'God will direct you,' answered the angel. The dream, we are told, 'excited curiosity without fostering delusion'. The two pilgrims, who had now been some months in Baghdad, found that their funds were getting low; and as the pilgrimage season was again approaching, they set out with the Persian caravan, hoping to learn from their compatriots in Mecca whether they could now safely return to the Regency. The report they received there was favourable, and after again performing the ceremonies of the *Hadj* they continued their journey by land to Oran. Near Tripoli they stopped to shed a few pious tears upon the tomb of Mahi ed Din's father who had died on his way home from Mecca, and by the spring of 1829 they were back once more in the *guetna*.

Mahi ed Din found that his prestige had grown considerably during his absence; but he was well aware of the importance of not arousing the suspicions of the Turkish authorities. He passed his days quietly in prayer, fasting, and good works, directing the business of the *zaouïa* and training his sons to succeed him in the hereditary profession of *marabout*. But rumours were spreading from tent to tent among the Beni Hachem. It was said that at Baghdad a Negro had suddenly appeared to Mahi ed Din while Abd el Kader was away tending the horses. 'Where is the Sultan?' he had asked. 'There is no Sultan here,' said Mahi ed Din; 'we are poor servants of God who are come from Mecca.' 'He whom you have sent to tend the horses is the Sultan,' answered the Negro. Mahi ed Din was embarrassed, and pointed out that such presumption would involve him in trouble with the Turks. But the Negro (or, if you prefer it, the angel) replied prophetically: 'Turkish rule in the west is drawing to a close.' Two years later, as we have already seen, the prophecy was fulfilled.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ARABS RECOGNIZE ABD EL KADER

THE capture of Algiers aroused little interest among the majority of the Arabs and Kabyles of the Regency. It was not the first time that one of the Barbary ports had fallen into the hands of the Franks. The Christians were detestable, but so were the Turks; and provided that the former limited their activities to the coastal towns, there was no reason to suppose that their régime would prove more odious than that of the latter. A sad disillusionment lay ahead.

In France, the indifference to the conquest amounted almost to apathy. There was hardly a tremor on the Bourse; the elections were unaffected. Three weeks later, revolution broke out in the Paris streets; the King abdicated, and Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, was placed upon the throne. For a moment the French officers in Africa had considered the possibility of giving active support to Charles X; but Duperré, who had pronounced liberal views, withheld the services of the fleet. De Bourmont's dismissal soon followed; and the Admiral, with petty spitefulness, took a last revenge upon the man he had always disliked, by refusing him the use of a French ship. In an Austrian brig, chartered at his own expense, the unlucky general sailed from the town which, but a few weeks earlier, he had entered in triumph, 'carrying away with him as the sole reward of his valour, the heart of his son who had fallen in battle'.

De Bourmont had assumed that the surrender of Algiers would immediately be followed by the fall of the whole Regency. His surmise was based on an almost total ignorance of the country and its inhabitants. Rarely had a conquering nation known so little of the peoples, the customs, and even the elementary geography of the land it imagined it had virtually subjugated. The coast towns of the Regency were in part familiar; but the great table-land which lay beyond the coastal plain remained unmapped and even unexplored; the arid tracts of desert, punctuated by green oases and stretching indefinitely to the south, were a part of that

great heart of Africa of which none could speak with authority. Only gradually, too, did the French become aware that there were others to be reckoned with besides the Turkish overlords: Kabyles (or Berbers), the descendants of the earliest known inhabitants, who tilled the mountain soil; Arabs and Bedouins, descendants of the invaders from Arabia, who pitched their black tents of camel-hair wherever there was grazing ground for their flocks. Besides these, there were the lesser factions in this strange, cosmopolitan population, whose position might one day have to be considered: Moors of mixed blood, who traded in the big towns; Kouloughlis, or children of Turks by native women, who were a common feature of the garrisoned towns; Negro slaves from the Soudan; heterodox Mozabites; and lastly, the indispensable but hated Jews.

Under the Turks the Regency of Algiers had been divided into four *beyliks*, three governed by *Beys*, and the fourth—that of Algiers—by the Dey himself. The western *beylik* had Oran for its capital; the eastern, Constantine. These were by far the largest. The *beylik* of Algiers included the town and a relatively small and somewhat hazily defined area around it. The fourth, that of Tittery, had Médéa for its capital, and lay between those of Oran and Constantine: it was later, under the French, joined to that of Algiers.

Though Algiers had fallen, the Turks in the Regency as a whole remained hostile. The Bey of Constantine, from the security of the amazing natural fortress which formed his capital, was openly defiant; the Bey of Tittery, more vulnerable, at first sent in his submission, but almost immediately withdrew it. Hassan at Oran, blockaded by the Arabs who detested his rule, seemed not unwilling to co-operate with the French, but powerless to act.

But it was clear that sooner or later Turkish authority was doomed. Even if the French failed to conquer the country, they had so weakened Turkish influence that the native populations would be in a position to eject their former tyrants. There were, however, two other powers to be considered—Morocco and Tunis. Abd er Rahman, Sultan of Morocco, soon began to assert himself in the west; and when the inhabitants of Tlemcen, near the Moroccan frontier, appealed to him for assistance, he sent them a near relative of his as governor, who made active propaganda in the western part of the Oran province. Hassan, after a vain protest, was placed in the humiliating position of having to send

for Mahi ed Din. Could he count on his aid, the Bey asked, and—if it came to the worst—a refuge in the *guetna*?

Mahi ed Din would promise nothing until he had talked the matter over with his kinsmen. At a family conclave in the *guetna*, opinion was strongly in favour of forgetting the past: one voice alone dissented—that of Abd el Kader. He urged that Hassan's conduct towards the Arabs had been unpardonable; that to support him now, would discredit the family for ever in their eyes; and that to offer him asylum in the *guetna* would mean pledging his safety—a pledge that it might well prove impossible to fulfil. The arguments appeared conclusive, and Mahi ed Din sent a messenger to tell Hassan that they were unable to assist him. In January, 1831, a French force under General Damrémont took the town, and the Bey was shipped to Alexandria.

Tunis had been an interested spectator of events in the Regency. Under the cloak of strict neutrality, she was only waiting until the French had been thrown back into the sea, before she reached out to snatch the prize for herself. Clauzel, the new French Commander-in-Chief, now came forward (on his own authority) with a tempting proposal: that a Tunisian prince should be appointed Bey of Oran. He would, of course, be a vassal of France; but when French influence had been eliminated, Tunis would be provided with a *point d'appui* of great strategic value. From the French point of view, the scheme was calculated to relieve the burden on the army of occupation. A certain Ahmed was appointed and was soon on the spot (he travelled light, his harem being limited to one—a youth of seventeen). But after an initial popularity, the new Bey failed to please; a bloody raid into the interior completed his disgrace; and after various disputes between French and Tunisian authorities he was withdrawn.

So long as the Christians confined their attentions to the coastal towns, the native population remained passive observers of their progress. But the first attempt by the French to advance into the interior had met with unexpected, and very severe resistance, and had given them a foretaste of the kind of warfare with which they were soon to become only too familiar. The little town of Blida lies among smiling orchards and orange-groves about thirty miles from the capital on the southern fringe of the fertile Mitidja plain. Three weeks after the capture of Algiers, de Bourmont had sent out a small reconnaissance column towards the town. The people of Blida had given the French soldiers a friendly welcome; but on

the outskirts of the town the latter were suddenly attacked by hundreds of Arab and Kabyle horsemen who had swept down from the mountains, and who continued to harass the troops almost to the gates of Algiers. De Bourmont, who believed the attack to have been organized by Turkish conspirators, had retaliated by expelling all the remaining Turks from Algiers—‘a most serious blunder, ever since repented’.

Clauzel, de Bourmont’s successor, was a man of action, but an invincible optimist who failed to grasp the complexity of the problems confronting him. Undismayed by his predecessor’s failure, he re-occupied Blida, and pushed on into the Atlas to seize Médéa, where he installed a Moorish merchant as Bey of Tittery. He was not even dimly aware of the ill-feeling which would be stirred up by placing a despised Moor to rule over Arabs. His grandiloquent order of the day from Médéa reveals that he lacked all sense of proportion: ‘*Soldats, les feux de vos bivouacs qui, des cimes de l’Atlas, semblent dans ce moment se confondre avec la lumières des étoiles, annoncent la victoire que vous venez de remporter . . . Vous avez combattu comme des géants. Vous êtes, soldats, de la race des braves et les véritables émules des armées de la Révolution et de l’Empire . . .*

But within a month he was forced to withdraw the garrison from both these towns.

Clauzel had offended by excess of zeal: his successor, Berthezène, appears to have been chosen for his general ineffectiveness. His régime, says Bernard,<sup>1</sup> was marked by ‘small and ill-led expeditions made at inopportune moments, half-measures, unwise actions and faults still more serious . . .’. But it is difficult to imagine what he could have achieved with the inadequate forces—less than two thousand men—left at his disposal. Médéa was re-occupied, then abandoned again, a costly proceeding which nearly ended in more serious disaster. Bône suffered the same fate; and the *marabouts* discovering that the French were not invincible, fanned the flames of fanaticism which had been smouldering in the central and eastern provinces. Oran was handed over to a general named Boyer, whose stupid brutality earned him the nickname of Peter the Cruel, and whose chief aim appears to have been the extermination of the native population. His confessed policy was that ‘the country must be civilized by uncivilized methods’. But he proved himself a man of action at a time when indecision seemed the order of the day, and he was given a free hand.

<sup>1</sup> Bernard, A.: *L’Algérie* (1929).

Since the fall of Oran, complete anarchy had broken out in the surrounding territory. The Turks and Kouloouglis were blockaded in the citadels at Tlemcen and Mostaganem, and the French in Oran; and Arabs and Kabyles, free from any restraint, roamed the countryside, pilfering and marauding. Party feuds were revived, and old scores paid off; no one was safe, nothing sacred. The Sultan of Morocco, whose representative at Tlemcen had been ejected by the inhabitants, now reappeared upon the scene, and Mahi ed Din welcomed this interference which might, he thought, be directed towards the restoration of order. But Boyer was not the man to sit back idly at such a moment, and an embassy to Abd er Rahman at Mequinez, timed to coincide with a show of naval strength off Tangier, soon persuaded that hesitant monarch, who had no wish to find himself at war with France, to make a discreet withdrawal.

By the end of 1831, Berthezène had at last become aware of his inadequacy, and asked to be relieved of his duties. The cruelty and injustice of his successor Savary, duc de Rovigo—an ex-chief of the Imperial Police—seemed better calculated to unite the various Kabyle and Arab factions than to improve the precarious position of the French. The natives confessed that he outdid even the Turks in brutality. One of his most odious acts of treachery was the murder of two Arab *kaïds* for whose safety he had made himself personally answerable. When two other *kaïds* (who seemed disposed to collaborate with the French) were attacked while passing through the territory of the Ouffia on their way back from Algiers, he exterminated the whole tribe. ‘Old men silently awaiting the death-blow, women crying for mercy, and children, who did not know what was to befall them, were unmercifully slain by the sabre and the bayonet. The soldiers returned with rich booty, carrying in triumph gory heads on the tops of their lances and bayonets to the camp. . . .’<sup>1</sup> where Rovigo ordered a firework display in celebration. It was subsequently proved that the Ouffia had not been responsible. The insurrection which this incident provoked, was put down by further wholesale massacre and pillage, and requited by intolerable levies which exasperated the natives, but failed to stem the rising tide of revolt. It appeared to be a studied policy of the French government to place second-rate men in charge.

No sooner was Moorish influence removed from the Oran province, than lawlessness and rioting returned with increased

<sup>1</sup> Pusky.

violence, and in April of the following year a gathering of chiefs was held near Mascara to find a remedy for this intolerable state of affairs. One cause alone, it was decided, could reconcile the various warring factions, restore a unity of purpose, and put an end to petty feuds—the *jihad*. To this end, a federation of tribes was formed to drive the French out of Algeria; and Mahi ed Din, the man of God, reluctantly found himself elected to be their leader.

All that spring the Arabs laid siege to Oran, while day after day their numbers were increased by the warriors who poured down from the mountains to join the banners of Islam. A taunting challenge to the French general: ‘Surrender, or come out and fight,’ remained unanswered. Then the Arabs advanced to the outskirts of the town and attacked outlying villages.

Even in such valorous company Abd el Kader distinguished himself above all others; but the attack failed. The following day, May 4, the objective was the Fort of Saint-Philippe which commanded the town’s water supply. Abd el Kader, conspicuous in a scarlet *burnous*, charged at the head of a mixed body of fifteen hundred cavalry and infantry to the very walls of the fort. Among the hail of bullets he passed unscathed; and when no one could be found to bring up fresh supplies of cartridges for the infantry who were fighting in the dried-up moat surrounding the fort, he took it upon himself to do so. There was something contemptuous in his disregard of danger, which his companions soon attributed to his having a charmed life; and his reputation grew from day to day.

Mahi ed Din was tireless in his efforts to unite the forces of Islam against the Christians. He almost rivalled his reputed ancestor the venerable Abd el Kader el Djilani in ubiquity. Now he was near the river Chélef, urging the eastern tribes to attack Mostaganem; now in Tlemcen, in a vain attempt to reconcile the Turks in the citadel and the Arabs in the town; then suddenly in Arzew, threatening vengeance on his son’s old tutor the *kadi*, who had been supplying the French by sea. He met with many failures. The Turks, forced to choose between the Arabs and the French, ignored the summons to the *jihad*; and two of the Makhzen tribes—the Douairs and Smela—began negotiations with the invaders, under whose rule they hoped to regain a part at any rate of their former power.

In the summer there was a lull in the fighting, and while the Arabs gathered in the harvest, the French turned their attention to

the defences of Oran. In the autumn, when hostilities broke out afresh, the Arabs were no more successful. Oran still held firm; and at the beginning of November, Mahi ed Din reluctantly dismissed his troops for the winter. In the spring the campaign would start afresh; but in the interval there was work—vital work—to be done in the fields.

Though the piety of Mahi ed Din, and his clarion-call to exterminate the Christians, had attracted many Arabs to his side, it had become clear to the chiefs of the tribes who most warmly supported him—the Hachem, Gharaba and Beni-Amer—that this informal leadership was in itself insufficient for the great task which lay ahead. Someone must be found with the authority and ability to formulate a clearly-defined plan of campaign, to organize resources, to raise revenues by regular taxation, and to call into being the vast army which would be needed to expel the invaders—in a word, a Sultan of the Arabs. At a tribal gathering near Mascara it was agreed to invite Mahi ed Din, or his son Abd el Kader whose bravery had not passed unnoticed, to fill the position of temporal and spiritual leader. Both modestly held back and the old *marabout*, with tears in his eyes, begged to be excused the proffered honour. No decision was reached that day; but with the darkness came guidance. Sidi Laradj, a venerable *marabout* whose *zaouïa* was also near Mascara, had a vision in which Sidi Abd el Kader Djilani, the old Baghdad dervish, appeared among the rolling plains of Mascara and drew his attention to a number of seats, in the centre of which stood a great golden throne. ‘For whom is the throne?’ asked Sidi Laradj. ‘For Hadj Abd el Kader ould Mahi ed Din,’ replied the dervish. At dawn Sidi Laradj set out with four hundred horsemen to pay homage to the young Sultan. Meanwhile el Djilani had also troubled the sleep of Mahi ed Din. He reminded him of the vision he had had at Baghdad, and added: ‘Your son Abd el Kader shall be Sultan. If you should accept, he will die; but if he accepts, then you will die.’

News of these manifestations soon spread through the province, where the earlier prophecies had not been forgotten, and three days later Abd el Kader entered Mascara in triumph. In the courtyard of the Bey’s palace (for Mascara had at one time been the provincial capital), seated in an old Spanish chair of state, he received the allegiance of loyal chiefs; then in the mosque he preached to the great crowd which had assembled to hear him. Now for the first

time, perhaps, he discovered the power he had to move men by his oratory.

He spoke first of lawlessness and impiety, of the unbridled violence which prevailed everywhere. But he had a yet grimmer picture to paint: soon the Christians would be marching through their land, desecrating their mosques, carrying off their women and children into captivity. They must go with him to the *jihad*, he cried; and thousands of voices echoed the word which so often in the past had rallied the warriors of Islam. ‘Gathering fresh impulse from the responsive acclamations of his hearers, he swayed to and fro. He smote his breast. Big drops of sweat suffused his brow. His eyes glistened and flashed. He flung his hands aloft, as though appealing to celestial witnesses. At last, so crushing and overpowering became his excitement, that Reason might have succumbed, had not Nature, by a copious flood of tears, relieved the fearful tension.’<sup>1</sup>

It was dark before he had finished speaking.

The next day Abd el Kader reviewed his troops. We can picture the scene on that chill November morning. Below, on the Plain of Eghris, ten thousand Arab horsemen are drawn up in an immense crescent in the centre of which a large tent has been erected. The women and children of Mascara, and the men too old to fight, have been waiting for hours in the half-light, shivering in their ragged *burnouses*. There is unrepressed excitement, and the horses paw the ground restlessly. The harsh voices of the soldiers, the ululations of the women and the barking of dogs unite in a wild cacophony which re-echoes from the hillsides. Suddenly the first rays of the rising sun break through the mist and flash from the sabres of the soldiers and the gilded crescents of the tent; and at the same moment the outriders of the cavalcade, bearing the banner of the *jihad*, appear through the white gateway of the town. Muskets are fired; the cries of the women become yet shriller; the men are cheering wildly. Slowly the procession winds along the valley. Behind the fluttering banner can be seen the chiefs of loyal tribes—the Beni-Amer, the Gharaba and others who have come on their high-mettled Arab steeds to serve under the young Sultan. Then comes Abd el Kader himself, a simple red *burnous* flung over his shoulders, riding his favourite black horse, and followed by the chiefs of the Beni-Hachem, his own tribe, with Mahi ed Din.

<sup>1</sup> Churchill.

Abd el Kader is a little nervous, perhaps, as he surveys the great line of cavalry and the cheering crowds who now press forward to kiss his hand or the hem of his garment—to one accustomed to the battlefield, it is a more alarming ordeal than facing the cannon-balls of the French, or the grim wall of their bayonets. On reaching the tent he and his father dismount and pass inside. Then after a few minutes the old *marabout* reappears, leading his son by the hand; the son of Zohra, true to prophecy, is formally presented to the people. When the cheering has subsided, the Sultan speaks: 'I will govern,' he says simply, 'with the Law in my hand. By the precepts of the Koran, and the Koran alone, will I be guided. If my own brother forfeits his life by the Koran, he shall die.' Banners are waving, as the applause thunders out once more. 'To the *jihad*,' they are crying now. Abd el Kader leaps into the saddle as the cavalry wheel past him, and form up again to escort the new Sultan back to Mascara.

That evening Abd el Kader drafted a proclamation to the tribes:

'Praise be to God alone, and blessings and salutation from on high to him (Mohammed), after whom there is no prophet.'

'To (such and such a tribe), and in particular to its nobles, sheikhs, notables and ulemas.

'May God enlighten you, guide and direct your counsels, and give success to your deeds and actions. The citizens of the districts, Mascara, the Eastern and Western Gharees, and their neighbours and allies, the Beni-Sokrân, El Borgiés, the Beni-Abbas, the Yacoubiés, the Beni-Amer, the Beni-Medjaher, and others, have elected me unanimously, and have accordingly appointed me to the government of our country; pledging themselves to obey me in success and in distress, in prosperity and in adversity; and to consecrate their persons, their sons, and their properties to the great and holy cause.'

'We have, therefore, assumed this important charge (though with extreme reluctance), hoping it may be the means of uniting the great body of Moslems, of preventing dissensions amongst them, of affording general security to all dwellers in the land, of checking all acts of lawlessness on the part of the disorderly against the well-disposed, and of driving back and overcoming the enemy who has invaded our country with a view of placing their yoke upon our necks.'

'As a condition of our acceptance, we have imposed on those who have delegated to us the supreme power, the duty of always

conforming, in all their actions, to the holy precepts and teaching of the book of God, and of administering justice in their various spheres, according to the law of the Prophet; loyally and impartially, to the strong and the weak, the noble and the respectable. This condition has been accepted by them.

'We hereby invite you to be partakers in this pledge, or compact, between ourselves and them. Hasten, therefore, to make manifest your allegiance and obedience; and may God prosper you in this world and in the world to come. My great object is to reform, and to do good as much as in me lies. My trust is in God; and from Him, and Him only, I expect reward and success.'

'By order of the Defender of Religion, our sovereign lord, the Prince of the Faithful, Abd el Kader<sup>1</sup> ibn Mahi ed Din. May God give him the victory. Amen. Dated from Mascara, November 26, 1832.'

<sup>1</sup> Abd el Kader was at first known as the 'Sultan of the Arabs', a title which was soon changed to that of 'Emir' (Commander), and subsequently 'Emir el moumenin' (Commander of the Faithful). We shall refer to him in future as 'the Emir'.



THE DUC D'ORLÉANS AND THE DUC D'AUMALE  
From Berbrugger; *Algérie historique*



#### CHAPTER IV

### THE FRENCH RECOGNIZE ABD EL KADER

MORE than two years had elapsed since the fall of Algiers, but there was still no sign whatever of the submission of the Regency as a whole. In the east, Bône had just been occupied (for the third time) as the result of a brilliant *coup-de-main* by Captain Yusuf and Captain D'Armandy, but the French were virtually besieged there. In the west, there was a temporary lull in the fighting at Oran; but at any moment Abd el Kader might strike again. The neighbourhood of Algiers was no safer, and only a few miles from the capital the 'model farm', designed to be '*le noyau d'une vaste colonisation*', had been reduced by Arab and Kabyle skirmishers to 'a ruined square in the midst of a desert'. Only within the walls of Algiers itself, was there any evidence that the Christians had come to stay; it was not, in fact, until nearly two years later that the final choice was made between partial occupation of the Regency and complete evacuation. Total conquest remained an even vaguer dream, of doubtful desirability.

Major Sir Grenville Temple, who was in Algiers in the summer of 1832, has left an account of the effect of two years of 'civilization' upon the old pirate capital. Near the water-front the principal mosque had been pulled down to make place for a new square designed on French lines, where shops with glazed windows proudly displayed the penultimate fashions from Paris. The houses had been given number-plates, and the streets named with that ingenious incongruity so characteristic of the French municipal mind—rue Annibal, rue du Chat, rue Sophonisba, rue Sidney Smith, rue Belisaire, rue de l'Etat-Major, rue des Lotophages, etc. There were eleven *Grands Cafés* boasting billiard tables (of a sort), and four *Grands Hôtels* 'all execrable'. Two omnibus services had just been decided upon. A circus and a cosmorama catered for the tastes of low-brows and high-brows respectively; while a judicious sprinkling of '*piquantes* French brunettes' pleasantly occupied the leisure of the soldiery, more than half of whom were (at any given moment) in hospital with malaria, jaundice or worse.

Temple was prepared to be favourably impressed with what he saw, and even the brutal duc de Rovigo comes in for his share of praise; but it must be remembered that the duchess took particular pains to impress the English traveller, and invited him to her 'brilliant ball' (where he met the snake Bacri—cause of all the trouble—'*en grand uniforme*'), and sent him out riding with her 'two charming daughters'. Yet Temple could not fail to observe that all was not well with the colony, and that the veneer of civilization was dangerously thin. Readers of the *Moniteur Algérien* were 'sure to find one, and even sometimes two long columns of its pages filled with the sentences of courts martial, in which, for murder, robbery, desertion, etc., we find a long list of soldiers condemned to suffer death, *travaux forcés*, imprisonment, and a variety of other punishments'. The *Légion de Paris*, 'composed originally of the scum and refuse of the population of the French capital'; the *Légion Etrangère*—the newly-created corps of mercenaries whose name has since become world-famous; and the *Zouaves*, formed as a native corps in 1830; were brave enough when it came to fighting, but a constant source of anxiety where discipline was concerned. A French officer wrote in his diary that his men were 'robbers, pilferers and drunkards', and Algiers little better than 'a den of thieves'; he was not exaggerating.

Taken as a whole, the year 1833 was a peaceful one in the central and eastern provinces; and the occupation, at the end of September, of the port of Bougie, sacked and deserted by its inhabitants after four days of heroic resistance, was the only important military event. But in the west there were soon signs of Arab restlessness, though at first there seemed no cause for alarm. Abd el Kader, although loyally supported by the Hachem, Beni Amer and Gharaba, met with a blank refusal when he attempted to issue orders to the Douairs and Smela. His old tutor the *Kadi* of Arzew did not even deign to answer his summons to the *jihad*; the Turks who occupied Tlemcen and Mostaganem seemed more inclined to ally themselves with the French than with the Arabs; and Mahi ed Din, active as ever in enlisting support for his son, met with many failures.

Abd el Kader, who had made his headquarters at Mascara, was reluctantly forced to adopt severe measures to suppress murder and theft, and to restore order in the surrounding district; but a few executions soon had a salutary effect. The Gharaba meanwhile were busily harassing the disloyal tribes, and had attacked and

killed Sidi el Medani, brother-in-law of the *Kadi* of Arzew, who was on his way to Oran with flocks for the French. The *kadi*, to avenge his death, advanced against the Gharaba, but was defeated and blockaded in Arzew. In April Arzew fell to a surprise attack by the Gharaba who sacked the town and carried off the *kadi* to Mascara. On his person was discovered a letter from General Boyer: 'You ask me to surround Arzew with fortifications. Set your mind at ease. At the first sign of danger I will come to your assistance, and surround it with the men of my army.' Abd el Kader wished to spare the life of his former tutor; but Mahi ed Din, convinced of the necessity of making an example, ordered his execution during his son's absence. The *kadi* was tortured in a vain effort to make him reveal the hiding-place of the money he was reputed to have received from the French. Such acts of brutality were, for propaganda purposes, always attributed by the French to Abd el Kader; there is usually plenty of evidence, however, to show that they were performed during his absence and against his orders.

Rovigo, seriously ill, was now recalled to France, where he died shortly afterwards. After a brief interregnum he was succeeded by General Avizard. During this interlude there appears for the first time upon the scene a man who was later to play an important role in the French struggle against Abd el Kader, and who was destined, fourteen years later, to receive the submission of the proud Arab chieftain. His name was La Moricière. A young captain of twenty-five, he was placed by Avizard in charge of the *Bureau Arabe*, now created to regularize relations with the natives and to remove the necessity for employing crooked intermediaries. While he remained for the time being in the relative obscurity of the *Bureau Arabe*, the limelight turns suddenly upon a lesser man, Desmichels, who had just been appointed to replace Boyer at Oran. He commands our sympathy, but hardly our admiration. To Desmichels fell the task of first pitting the strength of the French against the valour and diplomacy of the young Emir.

Desmichels, who like his predecessor had a free hand in the west, lost no time in making his authority felt. In July, almost without opposition, he occupied Arzew, whose inhabitants had not forgiven the Emir for the death of their *kadi*. The loss of Arzew had an immediate effect upon Abd el Kader's prestige. When things were going well, the Arabs flocked to join his banner; but at the smallest sign of defeat they vanished into the mountains

again. It was in moments of adversity that the Emir revealed his true greatness. Time and again, defeated and almost deserted, his indomitable courage and the belief in his divine mission sustained him. With a handful of faithful Gharaba horsemen he now rode to Tlemcen and persuaded the citizens to lend him aid and money, though his eloquence failed to impress the Turks who held the citadel. On his way back to Mascara, news reached him of the death of his father. It was a severe blow, for Mahied Din had been his adviser and collaborator; and from now, the young Emir was obliged to rely increasingly upon his own judgement.

In Mostaganem the Turks still held the citadel, and Abd el Kader next resolved to eject them; but Desmichels, who got wind of his intention, forestalled him, forced the garrison to surrender, and returned to Oran leaving a small French force in charge. The Emir was soon outside Mostaganem; but Arab heroism, immense though it was, failed, in the absence of siege material, to dislodge the enemy. Desmichels waited until Abd el Kader's back was turned, before executing a plan he had long had in mind—a raid on the Smela. On August 6 at dawn a force of some thirteen hundred cavalry and infantry fell upon their encampment, burnt it to the ground, and carried off a quantity of cattle, as well as a number of women and children. But the return to Oran was less easy. As the day wore on, the heat became intolerable and the *sirocco* blew fiercely, while Arab skirmishers continually harassed the exhausted men. Then a small body of Arab horsemen fired the plains over which the French soldiers were obliged to retreat. Over burning cinders, through suffocating fumes, the terrible march continued; and those men who hesitated were soon dispatched by the *yataghans* of the Smela. A sortie of the Oran garrison alone saved the detachment from entire annihilation.

But the Emir's failure outside Mostaganem had done his cause a disservice that this partial success could not repair. The main body of French troops had been able to regain Oran with their prisoners and booty; and when those of the Smela who had been fighting at Mostaganem returned to find their homes destroyed and their women and children gone, their allegiance wavered. After negotiations with Desmichels an agreement was reached and, in exchange for their families and their flocks, the Smela promised to assist the French cause.

For a short time the disloyal Arabs were to be found at the

markets of Oran and Arzew; but the Emir soon discovered means to interrupt their food convoys, and the two ports, now almost entirely isolated, were obliged to rely upon revictualment by sea—an uncertain and hazardous affair. Food supplies at last became so low that Desmichels began to consider the possibility of negotiating with the Emir, provided that this could be done without loss of dignity. Abd el Kader, for his part, was equally anxious for peace, though he took care to conceal the fact. He feared the growing disloyalty of many of the tribes, and he needed time to build up the structure of his kingdom; but by the Koran it was impossible for him to make the first move. He watched for a situation which could be manipulated to suit his purpose, and he did not need to wait long.

An Arab of the Bordjia tribe, returning with a small French escort from Arzew where he had been taking provisions, was surprised by some of Abd el Kader's soldiers, and three of the Frenchmen were taken prisoner. Desmichels gladly seized upon the opportunity to write to the Emir:

'I do not hesitate to make the first advances to you. My position, strictly speaking, does not allow me to do so, but humanity compels me. I reclaim the liberty of those Frenchmen who, while engaged in escorting an Arab, fell into an ambush. I cannot suppose that you will make their release dependent on conditions, since, when by the fate of war some of the Smela and Gharaba were not long ago brought in to me as prisoners, I at once sent them back to their tribes without any stipulation, and treated them, moreover, with the greatest kindness. If, therefore, you wish to be considered a great man, I hope you will not be behind me in generosity . . .'

Abd el Kader's reply was scarcely encouraging:

"I have received your letter . . . and understand its contents. You tell me that, notwithstanding your position, you have consented to make me the first advances. It was your duty to do so, by the rules of war. Between enemies each has his turn: one day the chances are for you, another for me. The mill turns for both, and always crushing new victims. As for myself, when you took prisoners I never troubled you with reclamations on their behalf. As a man, I regretted their unhappy fate; but, as a Moslem, I looked upon their death (if it occurred) as a new life. You tell me that your Frenchmen were employed to protect an Arab. That is no reason with me. Protectors and protected were alike my

enemies; and all Arabs found with you are bad believers, and ignorant of their duty.

'You boast that you gratuitously liberated some of the Gharaba and Smela. That is perfectly true; but you surprised men who were living under your protection, and who were actually supplying your own markets. Your troops robbed them of all they had. If, instead of falling on those who were doing you a service, you had advanced beyond your lines; if you had attacked men who were anxiously waiting for you, such as the Beni-Amer and the Hachem, had taken prisoners from *them* and set them free—then you might with justice talk of your generosity. You would have deserved the praises you claim for yourself for having pillaged the Smela, and for putting about the report that I had fallen into your hands. When you march two days beyond the walls of Oran I hope we shall meet, and then it will be seen which of us will remain master of the field.'

The challenge could not be overlooked, and on December 2 Desmichels marched out of Oran. In the engagement which followed, both sides claimed the victory, for although Arab casualties were considerably heavier than the French, Abd el Kader pursued the enemy right to the gates of the city. Honour satisfied, the French General again appealed to the Emir. 'You will never find me deaf to any feelings of generosity,' he wrote; 'and if it would be convenient to you to grant me an interview, I would readily consent, in the hope of being able, by the most sacred and solemn treaties, to stop the effusion of blood between two peoples intended by Providence to live under the same rule.' The Emir, with assumed indifference, left the letter unanswered; but he let it be known in Oran, through two Jewish agents whom he kept there, that a more explicit offer might not be unacceptable. A month later Desmichels wrote again still more humbly, and Abd el Kader was now able to prove to his subjects that the French had come to him on their knees to sue for peace.

Desmichels had hoped for a personal interview with the Emir, but the latter chose to negotiate through intermediaries. On February 4 a meeting took place a mile outside Oran between two of Abd el Kader's generals, Miloud ben Arach and Ould Mahmoud, and Desmichels's representatives, Busnach (son of Bacri's partner) and Mardochée Amar. These Jews were the very agents who had been working for the Emir in Oran. They handed over a letter from Desmichels which stated the basis of the discussion from the

French point of view: Hostilities shall cease between the French and the Arabs from this day; the religion and customs of the Mohammedans shall be respected; French prisoners shall be given up; the markets shall be free; all French deserters shall be given up by the Arabs; every Christian travelling in the interior shall be furnished with a passport sealed with the seal of Abd el Kader's consul and that of the General. The document, which was unsigned, was brought to the Emir, who understood it to represent the French demands. He attached his seal and sent his generals to Oran with his own conditions, which were to receive the seal of Desmichels before the first document was handed back to the French general. Abd el Kader made the following demands: The Arabs shall be at liberty to buy and sell powder, arms, sulphur—in a word, everything necessary for war; the trade of the port of Arzew shall be under the jurisdiction of the Prince of the Faithful, and no cargoes shall be shipped except in that port; Mostaganem and Oran shall merely receive such goods as are necessary for the wants of their inhabitants; the General shall give up all deserters in chains, and shall not harbour criminals; the general commanding at Algiers shall have no power over Arabs who may come to him with the consent of their chiefs; no Mussulman shall be prevented from returning home when he wishes. Desmichels appears to have regarded the letters as mere preliminaries, and he signed at once. But to Abd el Kader the mutual exchange of these documents constituted a treaty—one which, by virtue of the second of his clauses, gave him the monopoly of trade.

Desmichels next suggested that the joint demands should be united in a single document in the European fashion; and the Emir, who had already got what he wanted, made no objection. A new, and more non-committal treaty—the famous *Traité Desmichels*, was the outcome. The terms of it, drawn up in Arabic and French, made no reference to the Emir's monopoly of trade; and a calculated ambiguity in the Arabic translation gave further colour to the impression that Abd el Kader and Louis-Philippe were negotiating as one monarch with another. For Desmichels, the letters originally exchanged now ceased to have any validity; while for Abd el Kader the new treaty in no way cancelled the favourable terms he had already secured.

Desmichels had informed the French government that he was negotiating with the Emir, but he had signed upon his own responsibility, and without waiting for a reply from Paris. When

a war-time measure only. The Emir could not afford to ignore the challenge, and at once issued orders to Mustapha to prepare to march against the rebels. Meanwhile several of the Beni-Amer chiefs had come to Mascara for Friday prayer in the mosque, and here Abd el Kader seized the opportunity to address them. He explained to them that in peace, no less than in war, money was needed for the government of the country. Moreover, he was bound to prepare against the possibility of hostilities breaking out afresh. 'Do you imagine,' he added, 'that the smallest coin of the tribute that I ask for will ever be appropriated to my personal or family expenses? You all know that my family property is enough for my own needs. What I demand, is what the law of the Prophet compels you as good Mussulmans to give; and in my hands, I solemnly swear, it will be held as a sacred trust, for the triumph of the faith!' His eloquence carried the day.

A message was immediately sent to Mustapha to suspend his march; but the old chieftain happened to have a score to pay off against the Beni-Amer, and there was the tempting prospect of loot: he ignored the order, and attacked. Abd el Kader, who never deserted his friends, started off at once from Mascara with a strong body of cavalry to rescue the Beni-Amer. He rode his grey Arab horse, and an officer held the royal parasol above his head, while the band—another symbol of royalty—played martial music. Near Tlemcen there was a sharp engagement in which Mustapha was defeated. But the victory was less conclusive than the Emir imagined, and the following night Mustapha surprised his opponents and completely routed them. Abd el Kader fought with his usual heroism: his horse was killed under him, and he was nearly taken prisoner; but at last, almost alone, he escaped in the darkness to Mascara.

Abd el Kader had been defeated by the Arabs! The almost incredible news swept across the province, where a hundred petty grievances and slumbering jealousies were awakened. The Angad, under El Ghomari, massed to attack; Sidi Larbi proclaimed his independence in the Chélib; Kaddour ben Mokhfi watched like a vulture from his stronghold near Mostaganem. Mustapha followed up his victory by an appeal to Desmichels for aid to break once and for all, the power of the young upstart. But the French general clung to his policy of using Abd el Kader's authority; he not only refused help, but threatened Mustapha with reprisals if he persisted with his rebellion. In this he acted contrary to the

instructions he had received from France to promote discord among the tribes; and he even went so far as to send rifles and ammunition, together with good advice, to the Emir.

The magnetism of Abd el Kader's personality, and the timely assistance of the French, soon re-established his position among a number of the tribesmen. With fifteen thousand horsemen he advanced to meet Sidi Larbi who was marching on Mascara, completely defeated him at El Bordj which he burnt to the ground, and brought the Chélib tribe to heel. Turning towards Tlemcen he struck at Mustapha and routed his army. The old chief, wounded in the battle and humiliated by his defeat, declared that he would never 'bow his grey hairs before a mere child', and retired with his family to the Turks in the citadel. The Emir treated the Douairs and Smela leniently, gave them Mustapha's nephew El Mezari as chief, and took pains to win them over to his cause.

Abd el Kader at first hoped to round off his victory by forcing the citadel to capitulate; but he had no siege material, and Desmichels, cautious for once, would not provide him with artillery without reference to Paris. After a month's fruitless delay the troops grew restless, and the Emir led them back to Mascara. His entry into the capital was triumphant, and the remaining rebels now saw the futility of further resistance. In October Sidi Larbi surrendered and was imprisoned at Mascara where he died shortly afterwards of cholera which had broken out round Oran; and El Ghomari, ceaselessly pursued, half-starved and exhausted, gave himself up and was sentenced to death. Though he managed to make his escape, after a short period of liberty he was recaptured and executed.

Abd el Kader, rid of his most dangerous rivals, was now free to turn his attention to the organization of his kingdom, where with a firm hand he suppressed crime and soon restored a reasonable degree of order and security. He divided up the territory into two large districts or *khalifaliks*, with Mascara and Tlemcen as their capitals, and these districts were further subdivided into *aghaliiks*. A small regular army was raised, and trained with the help of French non-commissioned officers; powder-mills, cannon-foundries and workshops for the manufacture of rifles were set up and placed under the direction of Europeans. Thus Abd el Kader, who regarded the peace as little more than a truce, worked and planned for the day when, inevitably, hostilities would break out afresh—

the day when, with the help of Allah, he would extend his kingdom to the borders of Tunisia and drive the Christians into the sea.

In July, 1834, it had been decided in Paris that Algeria should be governed in future by a Governor-General and a Council, and in October Comte Drouët d'Erlon was appointed to fill the new office. The choice was unfortunate. Drouët d'Erlon was in his seventieth year, a worn-out relic of the *Empire* who reluctantly exchanged the pleasurable obscurity of well-earned retirement for a short and inglorious term of office under the pitiless glare of the African sun.

It soon became general knowledge that Abd el Kader was planning to cross the Chélif and to extend his sphere of influence in the central province. In December he informed the Governor of his intention. The reply he received was curt: 'I would point out to you,' wrote d'Erlon, 'that General Desmichels never had any authority except in the province of Oran, and that he could not therefore stipulate anything with regard to the rest of the Regency. Even by giving the widest possible interpretation to the Treaty made between you in February, you can only have claims upon the province of Oran . . . We cannot allow you to enter the province of Tittery. What happens there is my affair, and I am not at war with its inhabitants. I have not as yet any fixed plan with regard to setting up French establishments at Blida and Boufarik; but when I think that it is in the interests of France to do so, no one shall hinder me.' In the face of this unexpected firmness, the Emir paused.

The recall of Desmichels in January, 1835, was a serious blow for Abd el Kader. D'Erlon, who had learned with amazement of the existence of the preliminary notes of the *Traité Desmichels*, demanded the immediate dismissal of his subordinate at Oran; and in February the Emir was told that, since the French Government had not been informed of these letters at the time, it could no longer consider their contents binding.

In Algiers the Emir's *oukil* (representative) was an Algerian Jew named Judas ben Duran. Educated in Europe, ben Duran not only spoke French fluently but understood the French character. He was a brilliant diplomat, whose cunning and skill in intrigue were unequalled in the Regency, and he very soon had d'Erlon in his pocket. He was constantly to be seen at the Governor's table or driving with him in his carriage, and was admitted at all hours to the palace where he learned everything which passed in the most secret conferences. By degrees he succeeded in convincing d'Erlon

that it was in the best interests of France to allow the Emir a free hand in Tittery. Thus the situation was gradually reversed: while General Trézel, Desmichels's successor at Oran, attempted, in accordance with the Governor's original orders, to adopt an uncompromising firmness in his dealings with the Emir, the latter at length became a mere pawn whose moves were directed by the obsequious *oukil*.

In a short campaign during March, Abd el Kader dealt effectively with one or two petty risings in the west, and informed Trézel that he purposed following up his success by crossing the Chélik and marching upon Miliana. His progress was a triumph. To his personal prestige was now added the reputation he had earned by restoring order to the Oran province, and he was everywhere greeted by chiefs who begged him to do as much for Tittery. In the middle of April he entered Miliana. D'Erlon, with ben Duran at his elbow, took no steps to interrupt his advance, but continued a series of desultory skirmishes with the Hadjoute tribe who, if the figures of the *Moniteur Algérien* could have been trusted, had already been exterminated more than once.

At the same moment there appears from the south a curious figure who holds the stage for a short and spectacular interlude—El Hadj Moussa el Derkaoui. This fanatical Saharan *marabout*, who had built up a reputation by his reputed miracles, now crossed the Atlas with a large body of wild Bedouins and advanced on Médéa proclaiming that Allah had called him from the burning south to annihilate the Christians and their infamous ally Abd el Kader. Moussa himself invariably proceeded upon a richly caparisoned donkey, the miraculous gift, he declared, of the Saints, and a mascot which made him invincible. His numbers were soon increased by many of those orthodox Mohammedans who disapproved of the Emir's intimacy with the French, as well as by the usual horde of adventurers out for plunder. Outside Médéa the ragged, ill-disciplined army paused while Moussa asked permission to kill all the Jews and Mozabites in the town. The influential inhabitants, many of whom were Jews, having appealed in vain to d'Erlon for assistance, attempted with food and bribes to conciliate the *marabout* and thus postpone the day of their massacre.

The Emir watched from Miliana the uncontested advance of the rival *marabout*. If Moussa could march unchallenged into Tittery, why should not he? The desert chief, after a final vain appeal to the Emir to abandon his wicked ways and march with

him on Algiers, decided to dispose once and for all of Abd el Kader before pitting his strength against the Christians. The two armies met on April 22nd. The Emir had some three thousand cavalry and eight hundred infantry in the field, as well as four cannon. Moussa's disorderly rabble was far larger; he prophesied a brilliant victory, and that the Emir's cannon would not go off. Abd el Kader's men were somewhat shaken by the prediction. 'If the cannon do not go off,' announced the Emir, 'we will submit. It will be God's will.' But they did; and the panic produced by the unfulfilled prophecy contributed as much to the Emir's victory as the rather haphazard aim of his gunners. Moussa's defeat was complete: his wife and daughters and—far worse—the sacred donkey fell, together with a great quantity of booty, into the hands of Abd el Kader, who generously returned the women to his conquered foe. The latter now vanishes for ever into the stony wastes from which he had too rashly emerged.

Abd el Kader, though the gates of Médéa were open to him, still hesitated to occupy the town in direct defiance of d'Erlon's orders. He could afford to wait. He contented himself therefore with appointing his own representative and, on the excuse of seeing him installed, staged a triumphal entry into the city.

It is now time to say something of the private life, character, and appearance of the young Arab whose diplomatic skill and brilliant leadership was outwitting the best soldiers of France.

Though the Emir was rapidly becoming the object of general interest and curiosity in Paris, the little that was known there of his method of government, his ambitions, and even of his appearance, was for the most part as vague as it was inaccurate. Even as late as 1839 Abd el Kader still remained an almost mythical figure to his would-be conquerors, a creature more beast than human, the creation of malicious French journalists for a public who preferred to imagine that it was waging a glorious crusade rather than an indefensible war of aggression. It has suited French propaganda to perpetuate this legend: 'Abd el Kader,' writes Georges Yver (1931) 'was not, in fact, a champion of Arab national unity, because no such thing as an Arab nation existed. Nor was he an innovator who proposed to bring European civilization to a semi-barbarous people. Records reveal him as an ambitious *marabout* who knew how to profit by circumstances in order to substitute his own authority for that of the Turks. To achieve his

aim he made use of the prestige afforded him by his sharifian birth, his courage, and his ascendancy over crowds. A convinced Moslem, he none the less used his religion to serve his personal ends with a skill bordering on hypocrisy. Though he was, as a rule, high-minded and honourable, he did not shrink from cruelty and treachery . . .<sup>1</sup> Much of this picture is unjust. Abd el Kader had accepted the leadership of his people with reluctance; his only ambition was to drive out the Christians and then to retire once more to the seclusion of the *zaouïa*. He sought neither wealth nor glory; as for power, it was nothing more to him than a means of accomplishing the task which, as Allah's instrument, he had been called to take in hand. His position as a religious leader was of the utmost importance to him in the conduct of a religious war, but he never abused it in order to further his personal ends. Though he dealt severely with traitors, he was rarely cruel, and certainly he was never treacherous. Acts of cruelty, for which the French found it convenient to hold him personally responsible, were in general committed by his *khalifas* and without his knowledge. Only towards the end of the war, when brutality had become general on both sides, did he occasionally sanction acts of the kind which, for propaganda purposes, had long been attributed to him.

A young French ensign, Auguste de France, made prisoner in August, 1836, and ransomed the following December, has sketched a swift but lifelike portrait of the great Arab leader: 'Abd el Kader is twenty-eight years of age and very small. His face is long and deadly pale, his large black<sup>2</sup> eyes are soft and languishing, his mouth small and delicate, and his nose rather aquiline. His beard is thin, but jet-black, and he wears a small moustache which gives a martial character to his soft and delicate face and is very becoming. His hands are small and exquisitely formed, and his feet equally beautiful. The care he takes of them is quite coquettish. He is constantly washing them, and paring and filing his nails with a small knife with a beautifully carved mother-of-pearl handle, which he holds all the while as he sits crouching on his cushions with his toes clasped between his fingers. His dress is distinguished by the most studied simplicity; there is not a vestige of gold or embroidery on any part of it . . .' But the French Press had already created and

<sup>1</sup> Azan, Julien and Bernard have written of Abd el Kader with praiseworthy impartiality; but they are exceptions.

<sup>2</sup> Abd el Kader's eyes were blue. He invariably kept them fixed upon the ground when in the presence of Christians.

set up a dummy far better suited as a butt for ridicule and abuse; in its cartoons Abd el Kader was usually made to appear as a degenerate mulatto, tricked out in the ceremonial costume of an Indian rajah and as black-skinned as nineteenth century printers' ink could make him. He was, of course, represented, not as a patriot working to unite the forces of Islam to drive out the invaders, but as a misguided young upstart who preferred to keep his people in darkness when the French were generously holding out to them the glorious benefits of their civilization and culture.

It is not fitting, perhaps, for an Englishman to throw the first stone, for there are parallels enough to be found in our own early attempts at colonization. Moreover, there was some excuse for these misconceptions, for so few Europeans had had the privilege of seeing Abd el Kader, or of studying his methods. Deserters and renegades, it is true, had joined his army and helped to organize his factories; but hardly any of these had had either the time or the talent to put their observations on paper or the opportunity of conveying their information to Europe. De France was able to give an interesting description of life in the Arab camp, but his impressions of the Emir were necessarily superficial. Berndt, a German student of Halle University, who had joined the Foreign Legion, remained with Abd el Kader from 1835 to 1838 and published a book of reminiscences on his return to Germany; Colonel Scott, an Englishman who was in the Arab camp in 1841, also wrote his memoirs; and Abbé Suchet, who visited Abd el Kader in 1841 to arrange for the exchange of prisoners, kept notes of his conversation with the Emir on the subject of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> But no Christian could at this time hope to penetrate the reserve behind which Abd el Kader shielded himself from the defilement of the infidel. There were only two foreigners who came to know him intimately before his surrender to the French in 1847—ben Duran, and a Frenchman named Léon Roches. Of these, the former seems to have been wise enough to have committed little or nothing to paper; the latter, a nominal convert to Islam, published in his old age a work of the highest importance which we shall discuss in due course. At a later date, while Abd el Kader was in French imprisonment, Colonel Daumas and the interpreter, Bellemare, came to know him well; and in the winter of 1859 an Englishman, Colonel Churchill, spent five months with the Emir at Damascus, the fruits of his stay being a book of considerable interest.

<sup>1</sup> Given in Dawson Borrer's: *Narrative of a Campaign against the Kabailes.*

There are, too, several biographies in Arabic which, according to Azan,<sup>1</sup> are mainly made up of anecdotes and inaccuracies.

One of the most conspicuous traits of Abd el Kader's character was his asceticism. His dress, his food, were of the simplest. His clothes hardly differed from those worn by the meanest Arab—a cotton shirt covered by a woollen one; a *haïk* held in position by a cord of twisted camel hair; and two *burnouses*, the outer one usually brown. A small quantity of the plainest food—a handful or two of boiled corn or a bowl of milk—was all that he needed, though when meat was plentiful he accepted his share of it. ‘The less one eats, the better one is,’ he used to say; and certainly he practised what he preached. Thanks to his strong physique and his healthy way of living, he was able to endure almost unlimited hardship and fatigue. When campaigning, he not infrequently spent thirty-six or forty-eight hours at a stretch in the saddle, only dismounting at the hours of prayer. His family estate furnished him with the little money that he needed; the residue he gave to the sick and the poor. When in 1841 the French burnt his home and destroyed his crops, he consented to take from the public treasury the barest minimum necessary for his personal expenses. In 1839, when after an unstable interlude of peace the war broke out afresh, he publicly sold in Mascara the jewels belonging to his family, in favour of a special fund which he was obliged to raise; and those of its citizens who had grumbled at the severity of the tax immediately paid their quota.

Abd el Kader would not tolerate among others, especially among his kinsmen, the luxury that he scorned for himself. Returning on one occasion to his camp after an absence of many months, he found that his wife had put on a richly embroidered *kaftan* to greet him, and furnished his tent with Smyrna carpets, silk cushions and velvet divans. He stopped short, and cried angrily: ‘This is not my wife! This is not my tent! My wife wears woollen garments that she has woven with her own hands. My father and I never lay upon silk and velvet!’ In an instant the costly materials were replaced by simple woven mats and rough leather cushions, while his wife crept guiltily away to change back into the woollen *kaftan* of the peasant. On another occasion the Emir seized a dagger and with his own hands cut off the gold tassles from the *burnous* of his brother Si Mustapha. Only for weapons, symbols of the *jihad*, might gold and silver be used.

<sup>1</sup> Azan, Paul: *L'Emir, Abd el Kader* (1925).

Many examples might be given of his sympathy for the suffering of others. During the winter of 1839, one of the coldest ever recorded in Algeria, he was riding through the snow-covered mountains with his suite when he came upon two half-naked, shivering Arabs. The Emir, Roches tells us, at once took off his brown *burnous* and threw it to them, hoping that one of his suite would follow his example; but no one did. Prisoners were never molested when Abd el Kader was about; but the moment his back was turned, they found themselves at the mercy of the Arabs. To curb the brutality of his subjects he offered rewards for prisoners taken alive, but gave nothing for heads. The procedure contrasts favourably with French methods: in 1840, when the traitor Ben Gana forwarded five hundred pairs of ears to General Galbois, 'the Arab received in return,' says Azan 'the Cross of the Legion of Honour and the sum of fifty thousand francs.'

It was entirely due to Abd el Kader's initiative, Bellemare<sup>1</sup> says, that the celebrated exchange of prisoners took place in 1841. For Dupuch, first Bishop of Algiers, the Emir had conceived the warmest admiration, though the two men had never met; each understood the other to be in the fullest sense a 'man of God'. Though France was unwilling to act officially, the Bishop was empowered to negotiate; and on May 18, 1841 French prisoners were handed over to Dupuch by one of the Emir's *khalifas* in return for an equal number of Arabs. The following year Abd el Kader, finding himself unable to feed his prisoners, released a number without exchange. One of these wrote: 'Abd el Kader acted towards me with a magnanimity that I should never have met with in the most civilized countries in Europe.'

The Emir had the greatest respect and affection for his parents. One day he rode with Roches to visit the tomb of a celebrated *marabout* of the desert, Sidi Bouzid. Inside the building Abd el Kader knelt to pray beside the sarcophagus of the saint. Presently Roches heard the sound of sobbing which the Emir was vainly trying to stifle. Later that day, as they rode together, the Frenchman ventured to ask him why he had been weeping. 'I was thinking of my father,' answered Abd el Kader, 'the father to whom I owe more than my life, for it was he who taught me to prefer the service of God above all the things of this world. I never approach the tomb of a saint without experiencing afresh the boundless grief that I suffered when God called him to His side.'

<sup>1</sup> Bellemare, Alex.: *Abd el Kader* (1863).

On another occasion news reached Abd el Kader at Tagdempt that his mother Lalla Zohra was seriously ill. He started off at once for Bou-Khorchef where she was lying. 'No one is obliged to come with me,' he told his suite who rather grudgingly prepared to accompany him. It was snowing, and bitterly cold. As they rode, the Emir repeated over and over again a prayer that he might find her still alive: 'Lord, give me grace to be in time to receive her blessing.' At Teniet el Had a two hours' halt was made; the Emir spent it in prayer. He arrived at Bou-Khorchef the following morning, to find his mother out of danger. He had covered nearly a hundred miles in fifteen hours; but of the sixty men who had set out with him from Tagdempt, only eleven had been able to keep up with him, one of these being Roches who relates the story.

Nothing was ever allowed to interfere with Abd el Kader's strict observance of the ritual of Islam. During a winter campaign in the Djebel Amour a blizzard was raging and snow lay more than a foot deep, yet 'when the hour of prayer arrived,' wrote Roches, 'the Emir would dismount, make his ablutions with snow, and recite his prayers just as though he was in his tent. It was a rare thing to see any one follow his example.' This was not mere display, for Roches, as we shall see later, had opportunities of watching, unobserved, the ecstasy of his private devotions. Abd el Kader had, in short, the simple, unquestioning faith of a medieval saint.

Si Kaddour ben Rouila, one of the Emir's Arab biographers, has drawn a faithful and sympathetic portrait of the great patriot who for fifteen years held the might of France at bay: 'El Hadj Abd el Kader does not love the world, but withdraws from it as much as he may . . . He rises during the night to recommend to the All-Highest his soul and those of his servants; his only pleasure is in prayer and fasting, to absolve himself from all sin. He fears God; he is civil to all men; he is not overbearing towards the slaves of God. He is virtuous, but makes no display of it; he is completely honest, and will never take anything for himself from the public treasury; he administers justice to the humblest Mussulman . . . He neither eats, drinks, nor clothes himself but as his religion allows . . . His judgements are given in accordance with the best authorities; he shows no indulgence towards the man who commits a serious offence, and would punish his own son under the same circumstances; he hates the man who does not follow the right way, but he loves him who practises his religion and wrongs no one;

he loves him for God's sake, and not for his own; he would hate his closest kinsman if he were to commit an offence against God.'

This is the true picture of the man; of the simple, pious recluse who proved himself a born military leader, organizer, diplomat, and administrator. It was inevitable that the singleness of his purpose should be doubted, and we have seen how his quick rise to power made him bitter enemies, even among his own countrymen. He had to fight not only the Christians, the Turks and the Koulougis, but the Makhzen tribes and the old military nobility among the Arabs—men like Mustapha Ben Ismaël who not unnaturally scorned to take their orders from a youngster fresh from the *zouïa*. Abd el Kader overcame every obstacle. He outwitted the French, making use of their blunders and half-measures to establish his power, and watched them overthrow his most dangerous rival Ahmad in Constantine; he attacked and defeated the Arab leaders who refused to follow him, or reduced them to impotence within the walls of a fortress. He owed his success in part to French incompetence, in part to his own superb qualities of leadership. Energetic, fearless, patient under defeat, and with an unquenchable belief in his divine mission, he went forward with but one aim—to expel the invaders. In war, such a leader can never long lack followers; as often as defeat scattered his troops, so often his own unbreakable spirit drew them again from their mountain retreats. No one knew better when to punish, when to cajole, when to strike, when to forgive. Round his campfires the poets who served him sang, as in the days of the Prophet, epics of his greatness:

'Our master is like the sun in springtime, of which every one seeks a ray.

'This man is the basis of our faith, the most learned of all *marabouts*.

'He understands all the scriptures, all books . . .

'He is the most fearless of warriors . . . when he mounts his black steed he seems as humble as a little child; half his face is covered, yet his courage and strength are those of a lion . . .'

Had Abd el Kader been able to find lieutenants worthy of himself, he might have driven the French into the sea; had his people been willing to follow him in peace as they did in war, he might conceivably have created a stable empire in North Africa. Many years later he told the bitter truth to one of the Frenchmen against whom he had fought: 'In all Morocco and Algeria I could not find a man after my own heart.'

## CHAPTER VI

### TRÉZEL

TRÉZEL, Abd el Kader's next victim, had none of the outward characteristics of a soldier. He was very small and dapper, delicate-looking, with an almost falsetto voice and a misleadingly benign expression; but in that little body, as in Dr. Keate's, 'was concentrated the pluck of ten battalions'. He had lost an eye at Ligny, but in the other was 'as much intelligence as would serve a dozen common countenances'<sup>1</sup>; at the capture of Bougie in 1833, though severely wounded in the thigh, he had continued 'spooning the skulkers with his sabre out of the doors'; and each subsequent campaign was to leave its scar too.

D'Erlon, his fears calmed by the insidious persuasiveness of Ben Duran, had allowed the Emir to cross the Chélif and to realize a part, at any rate, of his dream of extended influence to the east; and Trézel had watched with growing amazement the Governor's apparent indifference to this triumphal progress. He begged for permission to march on Mascara, but this was refused. D'Erlon, it must be admitted, realized that his attitude was open to criticism, and perhaps he was grateful when Ben Duran attempted to save his face (with the Europeans at any rate) by putting into circulation a rumour that Abd el Kader had acted with French consent. Unfortunately no one believed it.

Meanwhile the victorious young Arab was writing to D'Erlon to propose a definite division of the Regency and a new Franco-Arab alliance; a covering letter to Ben Duran (intended also for the Governor's eye) made it clear that war was the probable alternative to refusal. By this time D'Erlon had a genuine excuse for caution. He had been warned by the War Ministry that the annual grant could not be increased either then or in the near future, and was instructed strictly to limit the occupation and to rely as far as possible upon negotiation.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Campbell, the poet. He adds the curious information that the ball which struck him remained inside his head for two years, till finally it 'forced its way down to the respiratory duct between the nose and the mouth, and was extracted from the roof of the mouth'.

At the beginning of May, Ben Duran and a young French captain named Saint-Hippolyte set out for the Emir's camp with gifts for the victor and the Governor's reply. The terms now proposed by D'Erlon could not hope to meet with acceptance; and no doubt he only claimed the impossible in the certainty that Abd el Kader would do the same. Thus, if both sides yielded gracefully, a tolerably acceptable compromise might be arrived at. D'Erlon's demands included the Emir's acceptance of French sovereignty and the payment of annual tribute, the limitation of his kingdom to the province of Oran, and what practically amounted to a French monopoly of trade. At Miliana, at a carefully staged interview, Abd el Kader appeared to be willing to negotiate, until one of his generals (no doubt well coached in his role) begged him on his knees never to yield to the Christians. 'I promise peace,' said the Emir, 'but the French must evacuate Boufarik.' Saint-Hippolyte replied that this could not be. 'Very well,' answered Abd el Kader, 'I will not give it another thought. But there must be no more talk of Médéa. In any case treaties already exist, and I want to uphold them.'

The two envoys returned to Algiers, but were soon back again with a new letter in which D'Erlon offered to replace the arms that Abd el Kader had lost during the Tittery campaign. Thus D'Erlon, by the extraordinary gesture of rewarding the Emir for defying his orders, made it clear that he was prepared to go to almost any lengths to preserve peace. Ben Duran and Saint-Hippolyte found the Emir on the point of setting out for Mascara, and the latter suggested that the two should accompany him there. Saint-Hippolyte had been ordered to collect all the information that he could, and to his simple mind this seemed a heaven-sent opportunity. But since he did not understand a word of Arabic, he was dependent upon Ben Duran for all the information he gathered; this, needless to say, was carefully edited and pleasantly misleading.

Abd el Kader did not take the shortest way to Mascara. Purposely passing among those tribes whose allegiance was the most wavering, he displayed Saint Hippolyte to the delighted Arabs now in the guise of a hostage, now as an ambassador come to bring the submission of the Sultan of Europe. The young officer, who failed to grasp the reason of his immense popularity, smiled and bowed his way through cheering crowds from Tittery to Oran. He was delighted at the honour shown to the French uniform, and

totally unaware that his visit had done more to advance the Emir's cause than half a dozen victories in the field.

Three days after his arrival in Mascara Abd el Kader put his own terms into the hands of the surprised Frenchman. Briefly they were as follows: the Emir and the Governor-General were each to keep the territory they had subjugated; the Emir would keep the Governor-General informed of appointments and changes of chiefs at Médéa and Miliana, so that the Governor-General could communicate with him through them; commerce was to be free, the Emir being at liberty to buy rifles, powder, sulphur, etc., in Algiers; the Emir and the Governor-General would mutually give up all deserters; and finally, the Emir would inform the Governor-General if he proposed making a tour towards Constantine, and of his reason for doing so. Of these clauses, that permitting freedom of commerce was the only one which (apparently, at any rate) was more favourable to the French than the *Traité Desmichels*. Even here, however, the advantage might well prove illusory if the Emir were able, directly or indirectly, to prevent his subjects from using the French markets. Saint-Hippolyte returned to Algiers sadly perplexed.

For some time past, Ben Duran had been busily promoting trade, and money was beginning to pour into Abd el Kader's coffers. Grain collected as tithes or bought cheap from the tribesmen (who were refused permission to sell to the French) was exported to Spain where it fetched two or three times its home value; and the salt works near Arzew had been taken over and made a lucrative concern. Trézel watched and waited for the time when he could put a stop to the Jew's activities. Ben Duran knew this; but when he tried in Oran the wiles which had seduced d'Erlon, he found them unavailing. So he determined to break Trézel. He now became studiously insolent to the latter on every possible occasion, treating him as a mere underling of d'Erlon; while his attitude towards the Governor became more obsequious than ever. The more, therefore, that Trézel complained of the insults he received, the more convinced d'Erlon became of his subordinate's incompetence—ineptitude which would lead, he was very much afraid, to a breakdown in his negotiations with Abd el Kader. In June, d'Erlon decided to go to Oran to see for himself what was happening.

The Emir wrote at once to express his pleasure at having in *his* dominions so distinguished a visitor, and improved the occasion

by adding a request for a mortar and two howitzers to attack the citadel of Tlemcen. The Governor was in favour of making this gesture of friendship; but Trézel firmly scouted the idea, and succeeded to some extent in convincing d'Erlon of the need for caution. The Governor's visit to Oran was brief and unenlightening, and the two generals, who disliked and distrusted one another more every day, parted without regret.

It was the Douairs and Smela—storm-centres as ever—who finally brought the crisis to a head. For some time past Trézel had been trying to entice them from Abd el Kader's clutches, and some had already joined the French cause when d'Erlon put a stop to his subordinate's zeal. The Emir, who appreciated the temptation to which these tribes were exposed by their proximity to Oran, ordered them to move their tents further inland; when his orders were not obeyed, he sent his *agha* El Mezari to remove them by force. The tribesmen appealed to the French for help, and Trézel without a moment's hesitation sallied out of Oran. At the approach of the French, el Mezari withdrew his small force, taking with him those Arabs who remained loyal to Abd el Kader. On June 16 at Le Figuier, six miles from Oran, Trézel further overstepped the orders he had received from Algiers by signing with the Douairs and Smela an agreement known as the *Convention du Figuier*, by which the larger part of these two tribes passed wholly under French influence.

Trézel hastened to write to d'Erlon to explain his action, and the conclusion of his letter showed how deeply he was in earnest: 'It is impossible, this being the state of affairs, for me to withdraw the troops to Oran. The Emir has got to mend his ways and allow the Douairs and Smela to remain under our authority; he must renounce the right he has assumed to force the tribes near Oran to leave. To let him exercise this right is to recognize him as an absolute and independent monarch, and to allow him to wreak vengeance on these two tribes in order to terrorize the rest; and it leaves Oran in a desert of eight leagues radius. In short, it means taking a course which is as shameful for France as it is cruel to those unfortunate people who asked for our help . . . I myself would not have the courage to accept the responsibility for carrying out an order to retreat, and if the formal instructions of the Cabinet should compel one of our most senior and most glorious leaders to give it, I would ask you to transmit it to me through my successor.'

Yet both sides were still anxious to avoid war, provided that they could get everything they wanted without it. Abd el Kader,

that no excuse might be found for precipitating a crisis, issued strict orders that no Arab was to fire upon a Frenchman except in self-defence. But he felt bound to write to Trézel strongly protesting against the infringement of the *Traité Desmichels* which forbade the harbouring of deserters. Trézel replied with the quibble that by 'deserters' was meant individuals, and that the clause did not apply to a tribe, or part of a tribe, which preferred French rule.

Abd el Kader's answer was a direct challenge: 'You know the conditions which Desmichels made with me before you came to Oran, and to which you yourself promised to adhere. By these conditions, every Arab who commits a misdemeanour or crime, and flies to you for refuge and protection, is to be sent back to me, even when it is a question of more than one individual. How much stronger becomes my claim on this point, when it is a question of whole tribes deserting and going over to you! The Douairs and Smela are my subjects; and according to our law, I have a right to do with them as I please. If you withdraw your protection from them, and let them obey me as heretofore, it is well. If, on the contrary, you persist in breaking your engagements, recall your consul from Mascara at once; for even should the Douairs and Smela enter within the walls of Oran, I will not withdraw my hand from them until they repent and atone for their faults. Moreover, my religion prohibits me from allowing a Mussulman to be under the rule of a Christian. See what suits you best; otherwise the God of Battles must decide between us.'

This could only mean one thing—war!

In the middle of June Trézel set out from Oran with his whole force—2,500 men—together with seven guns and a convoy of twenty large wagons. On reaching Tlélat, in the direction of Mascara, he paused, uncertain as to the best course to adopt. He saw that his troops had grown soft during their enforced inactivity, and he knew that they had had little or no experience of African fighting; moreover, he was finding that the cumbersome convoy badly hampered the speed of the column. Meanwhile Abd el Kader, who fully appreciated his opponent's weakness, saw his own numbers increasing from day to day. It seemed to Trézel on reflection that nothing was to be gained by further delay, and after a three days' halt he advanced to meet the Emir who moved forward from the position he had taken up near the river Sig.

The two armies met in the 'Forest' of Moulay-Ismaël, a large tract of undulating, rocky country with scattered pines, wild olives,

and mastic-trees. The Emir had disposed his troops skilfully. Some twelve or fifteen hundred infantry had been concealed behind the crest of a ridge commanding a defile across which the French, forced by their wagons to keep to the track, would be obliged to pass, while strong detachments of cavalry had been posted on the wings to envelop the enemy as they descended the opposite slope.

The first fire worked havoc among the French advance guard whose commander, Colonel Oudinot, was killed. Then the Arab cavalry closed in from both sides upon the convoy. The wagons began to wheel round; the Foreign Legion fell back. But a part of the French rear guard, supported by field artillery and led by Trézel himself, restored the morale of the troops by a daring charge and gave them the time to reform their ranks. The Arabs were routed and suffered severe losses. French casualties were light; but the engagement had been inconclusive, for the French poured out of the forest in a disorderly rabble more suggestive of defeat than of victory. Here Trézel halted to regroup his men, a delay which seemed intolerable to soldiers clamouring for immediate vengeance; and a number of them, breaking their ranks, fell upon the provision wagons, staved open the kegs of wine and brandy, and were soon indulging in an orgy which only the most energetic measures of the officers prevented from becoming a general revolt.

Both sides were severely shaken. Trézel's men were exhausted, and their future behaviour unpredictable; his wagons had to be considerably lightened to make room for the wounded, and this involved sacrificing tents and other stores; reluctantly he began to admit that further advance in the direction of Mascara involved an unjustifiable risk. The Emir for his part was no less embarrassed. At first he was in favour of immediate retreat, but he was dissuaded; then he resorted to parleying, but since neither side was prepared to yield, a deadlock was soon reached. For two days the armies remained encamped within a few miles of one another, and French inaction, interpreted by the Arabs as fear, told heavily in the Emir's favour. Reinforcements began to arrive at his camp and deserters returned, till he found with satisfaction that he was stronger than before the engagement. He now had at his disposal some 14,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry. For the second time in this short campaign Trézel had waited too long. By day the clouds of dust on the horizon told him that more and more horsemen were joining the enemy's ranks; by night the increasing glow from the camp-fires confirmed his fears. Since he had only three or

four days' provisions left, he decided to return to the nearest French point, Arzew, rather than to Oran.

At seven o'clock the next morning the retreat began. There were two possible ways of reaching Arzew—the one direct, but mountainous, the other across the plain to the Macta gorge and thence along the coast. Against the advice of his staff, Trézel chose the latter as being the easier for the convoy. Through the gorge the track lay between steep hills on the west and the swamps of the Macta on the east; and Abd el Kader, as soon as he saw Trézel's choice, realized that if he could occupy the heights in time, the French army would be at his mercy. But his infantry could not hope to forestall them. Without a moment's delay he detailed more than a thousand of his picked cavalry, each rider with a foot-soldier behind him in the saddle, to gallop to the spot and form an ambush in the wooded heights above the gorge.

At midday, after a five hours' march, the French reached the entrance of the ravine. Neither the burning furnace of the *sirocco* nor the incessant attacks of the pursuing Arabs had interrupted the orderliness of the retreat. With no thought of danger ahead, the exhausted men passed into the shadeless defile. First came a battalion of African Light Infantry; then the convoy (now obliged to go in single file) supported by two companies of the Foreign Legion and three squadrons of cavalry; and in the rear the 66th Line Battalion and two further cavalry squadrons. Soon shots began to ring out from the western cliffs, while pieces of rock fell among the advance guard. Trézel, who still did not grasp that he had more than a handful of snipers to deal with, sent two companies forward to clear the way; but to his surprise these were repulsed, and two more companies met with the same fate. Meanwhile the convoy, in trying to keep out of range, was bearing eastward along the fringes of the marshy river-bank. Only the artillery held firm. Soon a thousand Arab horse were charging the wagons, only to be driven back by a countercharge of French cavalry; but the latter were in their turn forced back upon the convoy, where stiff fire and the smoke and flame of bundles of burning brushwood completed their confusion.

Then suddenly, as Abd el Kader's main force closed in from behind, hundreds of Arabs poured down from the hillsides, and two thousand cavalry, who had crossed the river, began to attack the unprotected right flank of the convoy. Utter confusion reigned. The rear guard, fearing it would be cut off, surged forward

in a disorderly mass, while the advance guard attempted in vain to clear a path ahead. The wagons became embogged in the marsh; and the wagoners, cutting the traces, tried to escape upon the horses, leaving the wounded and the stores to the mercy of the enemy. One wagon alone, with twenty wounded, fought its way through the slime and the bullets because the sergeant who commanded it threatened to shoot the first wagoner who deserted. To the shout of *sauve qui peut* a company of the Foreign Legion broke loose and added to the general chaos. The other, consisting mainly of Poles, Germans, Dutchmen and Spaniards, fought on for a while; but the exhortations of its French officers were heard by few and understood by none, and in the end it too was seized by the prevailing panic.

Meanwhile a hideous scene was taking place among the marshes, where the yelling Arabs had fallen from all sides upon the helpless convoy. No mercy was shown to the wounded. Some managed to stumble or crawl to the water's edge where they found an easier death at their own hand; others ran naked and with bleeding wounds till they could go no further, and as they fell begged their comrades to kill them; the seriously wounded were murdered where they lay. Then the looting began.

The orgy which followed alone saved the rest of the army from destruction. First the advance guard succeeded in cutting its way through to the end of the gorge where, followed by a part of the main force, it poured in a wild stampede on to the plain leading to Arzew. Then a handful of brave men of the rear guard, utilizing the moment of respite, formed a rallying-point upon a small hillock to the top of which they dragged two pieces of artillery. Their waving handkerchiefs and shakos could be seen among the dust and the smoke, and above the shrieks of the dying and the roar of the firing echoed the stirring strains of the *Marseillaise* from a chorus of parched throats. Soon they were joined by Trézel and a small band of resolute soldiers all ready to die fighting, and together they cut their way from hill to hill and out on to the plain. As evening fell, the pitiful, mutilated rabble began to struggle along the coast towards Arzew, still harassed by Arab cavalry.

But in spite of Abd el Kader's orders the pursuit soon slackened, and the horsemen galloped back to the gorge where the booty was being divided up. By the light of torches a pyramid of heads was being erected. The Emir turned his face away from the ghastly spectacle and the savages he could no longer restrain; but he could

not ignore the propaganda value of these horrible trophies, and later they were collected and exhibited in Mascara and Tlemcen.

The sensation caused by the Macta disaster was out of all proportion to its military importance. The French had lost 254 killed and 150 wounded, and had left an immense amount of equipment in the enemy's hands. Arab casualties showed at least 1,800 killed, and the victory celebrations in Mascara were clouded by the personal loss suffered by the majority of its inhabitants. But psychologically, the effect was tremendous: the French general had measured his strength with the Emir and had been routed! France shuddered when the hideous details became known. Officers who had also fought in the great battles of the empire—at Lützen, Dresden and Leipzig—‘unanimously affirmed, that in spite of powder, smoke, and roaring of cannon, those great battles were by far less dreadful than the scenes on the Macta, where the wounded knew they were pursued by an enemy who had no mercy.’<sup>1</sup> Trézel accepted full responsibility for the disaster, and asked to be recalled. He was replaced by General d’Arlanges.

Abd el Kader’s losses had made it impossible for him to follow up his victory. He wrote to d’Erlon in words which La Moricière has described as ‘a masterpiece of modesty, dignity and shrewdness’. Trézel, said the Emir, had marched from Oran into his territory, but for the sake of his old friend the Governor he had overlooked this. Trézel had advanced to Le Figuier, to Tlélat, and finally to the Sig where he had begun to destroy the harvest. Only then had Abd el Kader attacked him. God had given the Arabs victory; but once the French had withdrawn to Arzew, the Emir had called off his troops. He thus made a virtue of his necessity.

D’Erlon sent a gracious reply. More than ever he needed peace, for the French forces had now been further reduced by the departure of the Foreign Legion, lent to help Queen Isabella of Spain in her fight against Don Carlos. To the last the unhappy Governor wavered in his policy; only the urgent and unanimous advice of his staff prevented him from disowning the convention made by Trézel with the Douairs and Smela, and leaving them to the mercy of the Emir. But in France public opinion was clamouring for the recall of the Governor whose feeble authority and muddled policy had sent so many Frenchmen to their deaths in the swamps of the Macta, and on August 10 Maréchal Clauzel arrived to take charge for the second time of French interests in Algeria.

<sup>1</sup> Pulszky; quoting Wagner, who spoke with many eye-witnesses.

## CHAPTER VII

### MASCARA

THE European population of Algiers entertained high hopes of the new Governor-General. He was remembered as a man of action, whose earlier failure had only been brought about by force of circumstances combined with an imperfect knowledge of the country. He would now adopt, they believed, a wiser but no less vigorous policy, and transform 'the French Possessions of North Africa' (as these scattered outposts were grandiloquently styled) into a colony of which France might rightly be proud. Clauzel himself was equally convinced of the excellence of the government's choice. It was this over-confidence, combined with an inability to learn from mistakes, which eventually brought about his undoing.

His arrival at Algiers coincided with that of a far less welcome visitor—the cholera. For nearly two months the disease spread a desolation in the town and its neighbourhood which surpassed the horrors of the battlefield, and 1,600 French soldiers and a far larger number of natives (especially Jews) died during that time. The French forces in the country now amounted to only 25,000 men, some 4,000 of whom were in hospital.

Though the French government was still anxious to keep the peace with Abd el Kader, public feeling in Paris demanded revenge and would not be gainsaid. In the end, the government gave way; and to add significance to the vindication of French honour it was decided that the duc d'Orléans, the King's eldest son, should accompany the expedition whose object was the capture of Mascara, Abd el Kader's capital, and the instalment there of a bey with French sympathies. But a variety of circumstances made it necessary to postpone the blow. For one thing the cholera was still claiming its victims, and those who were not struck down went about with the fear of death upon them; for another, the army was inadequately trained and improperly equipped for such an expedition. The artillery lacked mountain batteries; the engineers were ill-provided for operating in a country where

nothing was to hand; and the slow-moving four-wheel wagons with their worn-out horses might well become the cause of another disaster like that of the Macta. The Governor sent in a report to Paris, together with an urgent appeal for reinforcements and new equipment.

While Abd el Kader preached the Holy War, Clauzel opened his term of office with boasting and blunders. 'In two months there will be no more Hadjoutes,' he announced optimistically when that tribe continued its depredations round Algiers; but the Hadjoutes declined to be exterminated. To keep up the morale of the French population he drew up a large-scale map dividing the whole Regency into *beyliks* which he allotted to imaginary francophile beys, but his only attempts to realize this dream were conspicuously unsuccessful. He selected a Bey of Tittery, and had him invested and duly escorted by two thousand French troops to Boufarik; but on the withdrawal of French support the unfortunate Arab was hounded out of the town and forced to seek uncomfortable asylum in his father-in-law's silo. A certain ben Omar, who with the utmost reluctance had accepted the *beylik* of Cherchel, had to be forcibly embarked at Algiers. His suite, which consisted of a hundred vagabonds who had been pressed into service, was to receive the lordly remuneration of one franc a day a head. Ben Omar arrived in Cherchel harbour (in a gale) where he was informed in no uncertain terms that if he set foot on shore he would be assassinated. Clauzel's aide-de-camp, Captain de Rancé, who was accompanying him, saw that the situation was hopeless, and brought the poor-spirited ruler back to Algiers where, as an ex-bey, he proceeded to live in comfort on a pension from the French government. Clauzel, the soldiers observed to one another, was beginning to make himself slightly ridiculous.

But Clauzel had taken one step at least which was proving an irritation to the Emir—he had occupied the rocky island of Rachgoun, a couple of miles from the mouth of the river Tafna. The life of the little group of men marooned on this volcanic crag, little larger than a modern liner, must have been hideous in the extreme. Their tents (which had seen service in the Austrian campaign of 1792) had long ceased to afford any protection against rain, and little enough against sun. There was no wood, no straw, no hospital or medicines; and soon there was no food beyond a few fragments of salt beef supplemented by an occasional toad or snake—sole fauna of that inhospitable rock. The water

shortage was still worse. Even the duc d'Orléans, little given to extravagant thinking, was involuntarily reminded of the tragedy of the '*radeau de la Méduse*' immortalized by the impassioned brush-work of Géricault. But the brave little garrison served its purpose. Supplies arriving for the Arabs by sea from Tangier and Gibraltar were deflected; Morocco became uneasy; and the Arab forces blockading Tlemcen were temporarily withdrawn to watch the river mouth.

Clauzel had also constructed a fortified camp at Le Figuier; and when reinforcements began to arrive at Oran, the Emir found that he could no longer find credence for a report which he had been sedulously putting about that the French were withdrawing all their troops to make war on the Spaniards. To repair the damage done to his trade, Abd el Kader even penned a letter to William IV appealing for supplies through 'any Algerian port under the authority of our master the Commander of the Faithful Abd er Rahman', and offering a monopoly of Algerian commerce. The letter, which was forwarded by the British consul at Tangier, was calculated at the same time to flatter the Emperor of Morocco into more active co-operation; but little came of these projects.

By October it had become evident to the Arabs that the attack would not be postponed much longer, and Abd el Kader began to make final preparations to meet it. Though he relied in the main on the mobility of his cavalry, he set the defences of Mascara in order and, having safely disposed of his family and his treasure, awaited the onslaught. His plan was to harass the French army by day and by night, to cut off its supplies, and to make its retreat a more memorable disaster than that of the Macta.

During the first fortnight of November more reinforcements arrived in Oran; on the 16, the duc d'Orléans, heir to the French throne, himself appeared upon the scene; and late in the month (and far too late in the season, some thought, for campaigning in an unknown, roadless and bridgeless country) the army, 11,000 strong, swung south on its hazardous enterprise. Four brigades, under the command of Generals Oudinot, Perrégaux and d'Arlanges, and Colonel Combe, marched in a square round the *impedimenta*. The reserve was led by Colonel de Beaufort. Native troops included 600 cavalry of the Douairs and Smela under their bey, Ibrahim; and 300 Turkish infantry. By way of artillery Clauzel took with him six cannon and twelve mountain howitzers. An

innovation was the use of 800 camels for transporting food and wounded, but these temperamental animals proved a liability rather than an asset. On the eve of departure they broke loose with their native drivers and had to be rounded up by squadrons of French cavalry. In moments of danger they could be relied upon to stampede; in bad weather it was difficult to make them advance at all; and when it came to carrying wounded, they altogether declined to co-operate.

The duc d'Orléans has left a vivid account of the Mascara campaign.<sup>1</sup> There was no *allure de pastorale* about the fighting, and the young prince (he was just twenty-five), who had had no experience of war beyond that gained in a humble part played before the walls of Antwerp, found himself plunged all too suddenly, first into the discomforts, then into the horrors of African warfare. By night the noise, the insects, the cold, the excessive dew disturbed his sleep; by day he found the heat almost unendurable (it was an exceptional season), and would gladly have given a thousand francs for a glass of water although it tasted disagreeably of Epsom Salts. If Africa was like this in December, what (he asked himself) must it be in summer. But his keen eye observed, and his quick pen jotted down much that a professional soldier might not have troubled to record—ochre hills dappled with green patches of mastic-trees, which reminded him of a panther's skin; weary soldiers licking mud from holes in the ground till they were dragged away by their officers; Ibrahim in his dashing blue uniform and magnificent belt hung with glittering sword and daggers, and his band of jugglers who entertained the native troops in the evenings; the twinkling of Arab fires from the neighbouring hills; strange rats with feathery tails; or the column seen on the march, 'like a long glittering serpent surrounded by a halo of dust lit by the setting sun'.

Till they reached the Sig, the French met with no appreciable resistance. An occasional Arab might appear suddenly out of the shrub, fire wildly and, with a cry of 'ya tahan',<sup>2</sup> vanish again in a cloud of dust; but that was all. By the banks of the Sig a halt was made to dig an entrenched camp, where the heavy vehicles and field artillery, and a detachment of the more exhausted troops, could be left, together with reserve stores which had been greatly increased by the discovery of a number of underground silos stocked with grain and salted butter. El Mezari (Mustapha's

<sup>1</sup> Orléans, Ferdinand, duc d': *Récits de Campagne* (1870).

<sup>2</sup> Presumably *Yataghan*.

nephew) and several thousand Arabs kept up a ceaseless watch from the hills, but would not risk an engagement on the plain.

On December 1, after a night of violent wind which threatened every minute to capsize the tents, Clauzel made a reconnaissance in force with 2,500 men. His main purpose was to test the discipline of his troops under fire. At the approach of the French a 'tremendous commotion' was visible in el Mezari's camp. 'Tents were struck; cavalry and infantry poured down the hillsides to cover the removal of the tents. Clauzel sent over a few shells which fell accurately, but which they endured bravely . . .' Then followed a vigorous counter-attack led by Abd el Kader in person. Clauzel intervened with his artillery, and the French withdrew in good order. Casualties had been light on both sides; but the retreat of the French made the engagement appear to the Arabs as a victory. Clauzel on reflection decided not to make use of his entrenched camp, but to go forward with the convoy.

Crossing the Sig, the army continued eastwards parallel to the mountains. The rearguard, delayed by the dismantling of the trestle bridge (superfluous in any case, one would have thought, since the water was only 'a few inches deep'), now lagged behind the main body. Abd el Kader, foiled in his ruse of luring the French into the mountains, at once attacked in force in an attempt to divide the army into two; but Clauzel, by a brilliantly executed change of direction to the right, swung round and attacked the Arab flank. Then the French artillery opened fire, and a terrible slaughter ensued. The Emir, conspicuous in his white *burnous*, never flinched nor quickened the pace of his black horse as his secretary fell at his side and his standard-bearer crashed to the ground with his great red and white banner. For a while the Arabs fought on bravely; but the odds against them were impossible, and in the end the shrieking masses turned and fled in confusion to the mountains. Clauzel, resisting the temptation to follow them, continued his march to the east.

After a while the plain narrowed into a ravine hemmed in between thickly wooded slopes and steep cliffs dominated by the four white *marabouts* (tombs) of Sidi Embarek. Here the Emir, hoping to repeat the tactics which had served him so well at the Macta, had laid an elaborate ambush. His disposition would have done credit to a European general; it only needed disciplined European troops to put his plans into action. His tactics failed because of the impetuosity of his soldiers who fired too soon.

Abd el Kader had concealed three pieces of artillery on a steep crag, and these joined prematurely and inaccurately in the fray. One exploded, and the other two were soon silenced by fire from French howitzers. Again the Arabs were completely routed, leaving hundreds of dead and wounded upon the field.

The duc d'Orléans records an incident during the fighting near Sidi Embarek which has provided a theme for more than one French draughtsman :

'I was watching the spahis and other soldiers running here and there in spite of the risk of being hit even by French bullets, when I saw Sergeant Abdallah coming at full gallop towards me, his white *haïk* spattered with blood and his right hand hidden under the folds of his red *burnous*. His horse was running with its head level and its neck hollowed, like Murat's horses in Gros' battlepieces ; his turban was unwound and hung round his waist; his nostrils were open wide, and he looked like a bird of prey. A few paces before he reached me he drew his horse up dead and produced a head, dripping with blood, which he had just cut off. He held it by the mouth, its clenched teeth biting his fingers. It was the head of a rather handsome young man, but the expression of the face defied description ; once seen, it could never be forgotten. Abdallah stared at me with wild eyes and threw the head at my feet. It bounced two or three times and came to rest by a small bush. I tried to give him a few pieces of gold, as was customary in the east, but he refused them. "*Moi soldat !*" he replied, "*pas travailler pour de l'argent !*" And he galloped off again into the hail of bullets . . .'

The heroism of the deed was somewhat diminished by the subsequent discovery (passed over by d'Orléans) that the head had been severed from a corpse.

It had been the duke's baptism of fire on African soil. He had not shirked danger, and had received a slight contusion from a spent bullet. But he did not glory in the sufferings of his enemies ; and that night, as he wrote his diary by the banks of the Habra, he could not forget the gruesome scenes he had witnessed at the Sig and at Sidi Embarek. '*Quelques-uns des cadavres étaient atrocement mutilés ; il y en avait qui fumaient, d'autres d'où le sang s'échappait par les membres qui manquaient ; ailleurs c'étaient des masses sanglantes . . . Ces blessures de canon sont hideuses . . .*'

Clauzel, after a feint in the direction of Mostaganem, now plunged into the wild, mountainous country leading to Mascara. Abd el Kader had promised his soldiers that the gorge of Sidi

Embark would be the tomb of the French army, and the Arab defeat was followed by the usual mass desertions. Several influential chiefs withdrew their support, including el Mezari who, wounded and discouraged, reappeared not long after among the ranks of the French. For the moment the Arabs had ceased to be more than a minor irritation. '*L'ennemi, ce n'est plus l'Arabe*', wrote d'Orléans, '*ce n'est pas encore la saison; l'ennemi, c'est le convoi*'. The clumsy wagons had, in fact, by reducing the speed of the army to a snail's pace, laid a heavy strain upon the food supply, and were soon to test the ingenuity of the sappers to the full.

The army forged its way slowly ahead. D'Orléans, meanwhile, was becoming acclimatized; he beguiled the stony way by eliciting bloodthirsty reminiscences of the Turkish guide (a state executioner under the old régime), soon found that he could stomach 'jokes which would have made people's hair stand on end in Paris', and hardly winced when the Zouaves brought in a few Arab heads on pikes and tossed him one to catch.

While the French struggled on through the mountains, a grim scene was taking place in Mascara. The neighbouring tribesmen had surged from all sides into the town and, on the pretence of saving anything of value from falling into the hands of the Christians, had begun to sack it. The Arab irregulars, in spite of all Abd el Kader's efforts to hold them, were soon off to make sure of their share of the booty. News of the looting was not slow in reaching the French army, and Ibrahim's native troops, so loath to advance when there was real fighting to be done, immediately broke their ranks and, arming themselves with sacks and baskets, poured southwards in a wild stampede. Abd el Kader, powerless to intervene in Mascara, threatened and insulted, withdrew to Cacherou, a small estate a few miles south of the town. More than once he had been deserted by all; and in God's good time he would rise to fight again.

Clauzel, too, hurried forward towards Mascara, leaving the convoy to follow. There was no longer any need for military precautions; when more and more news began to come in of pillage and massacre, Clauzel and d'Orléans, accompanied by a regiment of cavalry, rode on ahead of the main body. It was raining heavily, and bitterly cold; visibility was reduced to a few yards. Suddenly the sky cleared, and the white town lay stretched out below them, set among the lush green of orchards and crowned

by the golden minaret of the great mosque. Flames were rising from the centre of the town; many of the outlying houses were already in ashes.

Within the city, which but a few days before had been the proud and smiling capital of the Emir's dominions, there remained little now but desolation and chaos. 'I could never have imagined', wrote d'Orléans, 'the horror of a town which had been sacked and burnt, where part of its inhabitants had been massacred. The street by which we climbed to the main square was littered with débris of every kind, with wooden beams splashed with blood and still smouldering. Everything was in a state of wild disorder; nothing remained intact. In the square, which must once have been an attractive place, pools of rose-oil lay smothered with heaps of tobacco which some one had tried to burn and which the looters had mixed with all kinds of filth to make it unusable. The houses were still smoking, and a thousand Jews—all that was left of a population which two days before had numbered nearly ten thousand souls—threw themselves weeping at our feet and kissed our stirrups . . . The women had been herded together and driven out into the mountains. A mere handful remained, hysterical, half-naked, clinging together in a little group in the icy, wind-swept square, their howling brats at their side. Hundreds of snarling dogs were nosing about in the refuse for tit-bits . . .

D'Orléans and Clauzel reached the Emir's palace which, though it had been broken into and rifled by the mob, still remained standing. But the rooms were flooded, the doors and stairs half demolished, and the smell of burning oil nearly suffocating. A number of Jews were at once put to work to make the building habitable as headquarters for the staff.

Ibrahim's soldiers, after a vain search for loot in the town, were now sacking the Kasbah. Here Clauzel and d'Orléans, 'wading knee-deep through biscuits which had been smeared with filth to make them uneatable' came upon them and, surprisingly enough, prevailed upon them to camp for the night outside the town. Though the food reserves had been polluted, much of the military stores in the Kasbah remained intact, including nearly half a million pounds of the best sulphur, the French howitzers which had been taken at the Macta, and a quantity of artillery.

Next day, to the astonishment and disgust of the French troops, it was announced that Mascara was to be evacuated immediately. Why this decision was taken has never been properly ascertained.

There was no serious shortage of provisions. Clauzel, it is true, had been ordered not to occupy any new town; but perhaps the real reason was to be found in the ill-health of the French soldiers, and in particular of the Prince. ‘It seems that the duc d’Orléans was ill, and that it needed the entire French army to escort this son of France back to Oran’ observed Wagner cynically. Clauzel, to give further justification to his decision, emphasized in his report the uselessness, from a strategic point of view, of the town, and (when he found that Ibrahim refused to be instated as bey unless the French remained) its unsuitability as the capital of a *beylik*. By thus abandoning Mascara, he robbed his victory of almost all its importance.

But before leaving, the complete destruction of the Kasbah had to be undertaken; and soon the arms factory and the arsenal, the store-rooms, the lawcourts and the mint, were well ablaze. A providential breeze carried the suffocating fumes of the sulphur away from the centre of the town. The artillery had been systematically destroyed, since there was not sufficient transport available to bring it away; only the French howitzers were saved. The Douairs and Smela, many of whom owned property in the town, preferred to destroy their houses rather than allow them to fall intact into the hands of Abd el Kader. The Emir’s palace was also set on fire by the French—prematurely, as it happened, owing to the excessive zeal of one of the cooks—and d’Orléans and Clauzel were forced to escape precipitately down a flaming staircase.

On December 9, after an occupation of less than three days, the army, lit by the fickle blue light of the sulphur flames, set out on its hazardous return march through the mountains. At its head marched Ibrahim’s cavalrymen, reduced now to the status of infantry since their horses were piled high with booty. Next came the Jews. ‘They were a pitiable sight, these wretched creatures whose lives we were saving by allowing them to accompany us,’ wrote d’Orléans. ‘Each had two or three children with him. The well-to-do women were crowded together by fives or sixes on camels which they had hired from the Arabs for their weight in gold; others were riding donkeys, and, bare-footed and shivering, tried in vain to get their children warm; the blind clutched hold of the tails of donkeys so that they could follow the column. There were mothers who had converted their shawls into sacks into which they had squeezed as many as three children whom they carried on

their backs. I saw scenes, and expressions on faces that I shall never forget.'

The motley rabble struggled onwards. Below in the valley a red glow lit up the pall of smoke which hung over the ill-fated town. Then a blanket of mist descended upon the column, blotting out everything, and blinding rain set in which on the second day turned to hail. The soldiers were often up to their knees in mud; the camels slipped and fell incessantly. 'Then the scene became truly awful. These wretched Mascara Jews, their feet bare, their clothes tattered and covered with mud, staggering under the weight of the children they carried, saw the troops overtake them and realized that they were powerless to catch up again. I saw several women, dressed in almost biblical costume and still good-looking, collapse together in a heap in the mire. They made no effort to rise; and there they would have perished if our soldiers had not dragged them out. I saw children lying beside them, unable to move, with not even strength enough to cry, swollen and purple with the cold. An old man of seventy who had fallen into the mud was so disfigured that it was impossible to tell whether he was a human being or an avalanche of slime. I saw three blind Jews being led by a one-eyed man—one eye for four. I saw camels which were carrying whole families come crashing down, all four legs at once, and remain engulfed in the clay, a shapeless, colourless mass. A blind man who was hanging on to the tail of a donkey sang a psalm to keep up his courage. I saw sobbing mothers stop, pick out the weakest of their children, kiss them with tears in their eyes, and leave them by the way, half dead already, in order to save the others . . .'

During those awful two days the French soldiers, though many of them were suffering from dysentery and all were exhausted, behaved with great chivalry. Most of the cavalry carried a child under their cloaks, and the infantry lent such assistance as they could to the women, the old men and the sick. Pellissier de Reynaud saw 'a *chasseur d'Afrique* carrying two children so young that he could only feed them by chewing pieces of biscuit which he then gave them to swallow.'

Every moment the blizzard became wilder; but towards evening, with dramatic suddenness, the sky cleared, and the quickening rays of the sun, breaking through the storm clouds, warmed the chilled bodies and cheered the drooping spirits of the pitiable, bedraggled caravan. Soaking garments steamed in the sultry warmth. Below,

as far as eye could see, stretched the endless, sunlit plains, Arzew, and the thin blue line of the Mediterranean. Two days later the army was in Mostaganem.

Abd el Kader had arrived in Cacherou to find that his family had been driven out. His wife had been insulted by his own tribe, the Hachem; her jewels had been taken, her very ear-rings snatched from off her ears. His splendid tent, a gift from Desmichels, had been ripped to pieces and divided among the tribesmen; the gilded parasol, symbol of power, had been stolen. 'When you are Sultan again you may have it back,' cried some one; '*Sultan el ghaba* (sultan of the thicket)', shouted another; '*Sultan el nom*',<sup>1</sup> suggested a third. And with obscene jokes and mocking laughter they drove him from the place.

He found his family at Sfisell, weeping, sunk in despair. To his mother, who tried to comfort him, he replied: 'Women, mother, have need of pity, not men.' But he could not disguise from himself that his prospects seemed hopeless. He had stood alone before; but then he had still believed in the sacredness of his mission, and that in time his luck would change. Now for a moment he doubted himself. For a people who could not unite, who crumbled at the first sign of adversity, who vanished at the rumour of defeat, there could be no real victory and no future. He assembled his family and told them that he had decided to withdraw into exile in Morocco. At that moment the news arrived that the French had abandoned Mascara.

The following day two figures might have been seen outside the walls of the smouldering city. They had rigged up a small, torn tent, an object so derelict that it had been scorned even by the looters, and were attempting to cook a few handfuls of corn in the inadequate shelter it provided. The blinding rain soon saturated the tent; the cold was piercing. But one of the two men hardly seemed to be conscious of the cold as he turned his eyes towards the scarred walls of the town, the town which he had rebuilt as his capital, in which had been centred the hopes of a free Arab people.

His presence could not long remain unknown. Skulking tribesmen in the nearby hills had recognized him and, shamefaced, began to gather round, accompanied by several of the chiefs who had attempted to stop the rioting. The French had gone, and they

<sup>1</sup> Berbrugger (*op. cit.*) declines to translate the '*sauvage obscénité*' of this epithet.

began to wonder whether they had not, after all, been too hasty. They begged Abd el Kader to lead them again. At first he was adamant: he had chosen exile, he said; he could no longer lead a people who did not wish to be led. Then they fell at his feet, began kissing his hand, the hem of his *burnous*. The very men who had insulted him most were the most insistent now. El Aouari, *Agha* of the Hachem, arrived with the royal parasol and implored Abd el Kader to take it back. 'Keep it for yourself,' the Emir answered, 'you may be Sultan yourself one day'; and he thrust it from him.

When in the end he yielded to their entreaties, neither the rain nor the cold could quench their enthusiasm. 'God's will be done,' he said simply. 'But remember, I swear never to enter Mascara, except to go to the mosque, until you have avenged your ignominious defeat. I see traitors among you; Mamour there is one; let him be hanged.' The sentence was immediately carried out; but there were no other executions, and no personal vindictiveness.

The day was drawing to its close as the horsemen galloped off to raise once more the battle-cry of the *jihad*. Away in the mountains the French were pursuing, through rain and hail, their incomprehensible retreat on Mostaganem.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TLEMCEN AND THE SIKKAK

THERE is no lovelier spot in all Algeria than Tlemcen. The casual tourist, falling an easy prey to the technicolour charms of the Garden of Allah, sheikhs, Oulad-Nail dancers, and palm trees silhouetted against prismatic sunsets, has no time for the tedious westward journey to the mediaeval capital of the central *Moghreb*. The town, which lies on a plateau in the centre of an immense amphitheatre of wooded mountains, is surrounded by orchards and luxuriant gardens watered by hundreds of gentle streams; and its spectacular ruins still bear witness to a splendour which once rivalled the great Moorish cities of Spain. In the citadel of Tlemcen the Turkish garrison, now under the command of Mustapha ben Ismaël, had held out for six years against the Arabs of the town and the neighbouring districts. The relief of the citadel was Clauzel's next objective.

Abd el Kader at once accepted the challenge; the Turks, he announced, must be preserved (whether they liked it or not) from the defiling touch of the Christians. The Beni-Angad under the younger el Ghomari (son of the chief whom Abd el Kader had put to death) marched at once to Mustapha's assistance. The Emir was anxious to settle with these Arab traitors before the arrival of the French who were, as usual, delayed by their cumbersome preparations. He set out towards Tlemcen with a small body of cavalry, and arrived outside the town; but he well knew that without proper siege materials he could not hope to storm the citadel. The Turks meanwhile had received a letter purporting to come from el Ghomari and fixing a rendezvous near Tlemcen for the purpose of handing over a badly needed consignment of food for the besieged garrison. Abd el Kader, feigning retreat towards Oran, collected together a body of infantry, and made a surprise attack on the Angad and 300 picked Turkish troops from the citadel at the very moment that the stores were changing hands. El Ghomari was mortally wounded, and both Turks and Angad suffered heavy casualties. In the town the

victory was celebrated with customary barbarism. After the Turkish heads had been paraded up and down the streets on pikes, the ears were detached and deftly flung into the citadel. With them were fragments of bread accompanied by notes which expressed the hope that they would stave off hunger till the Christians arrived with their consignments of pork.

A desperate appeal from Mustapha made Clauzel decide to march at once. On January 8, he set out with 7,500 men and a convoy of wagons—there were to be no camels this time. El Mezari now replaced the incompetent Ibrahim as commander of the native regiments. Meanwhile Abd el Kader had managed to put in position one or two old Spanish cannon which had been discovered in the town; but before they had had time to do any damage to the walls of the citadel he learnt that the French were on their way. Since he knew himself to be too weak to defend Tlemcen he immediately abandoned it, taking the bulk of its inhabitants with him. The Turks and the Angad at once sacked the town, while the Emir attempted to console its citizens with the assurance that as at Mascara the French would not occupy it for more than a day or two.

On the plains outside Tlemcen Mustapha came forward to meet the French general. For four years, in spite of the indifference, even the hostility of the French, the seventy-five-year-old patriarch had held the citadel for the Christians. Like a soldier glorying in his wounds he pointed to the scarred walls of the fortress; then he said simply: ‘In these last few days I have lost sixty of my bravest men; but seeing you I forget past misfortunes. I rely upon your good reputation. I and my people give you all that we have. You will be satisfied with us.’

Abd el Kader watched and waited near the mountain foothills; but the French seemed in no hurry to evacuate the town. Clauzel was, in fact, busy plotting an audacious *coup-de-main* whose object was the capture of the Emir himself. On January 15, rapidly converging French columns swept down upon his camp and routed his troops who deserted with what booty they could lay hands on. The Emir himself, pursued into the mountains by Captain Yusuf, only made good his escape after a fifteen-mile chase. That night, without tent, food, or fire, he lay alone under the winter starlight beside the horse which had saved his life. The helpless citizens of Tlemcen were soon rounded up by the French and forced to return to what remained of their homes and property.

In spite of orders from Paris to occupy no new towns, Clauzel decided to leave a garrison of volunteers in Tlemcen. There was no food shortage for the present, since the French columns had brought in a large quantity of cattle and sheep. The Governor-General now made one of those unfortunate blunders which did so much harm to the French cause. In order to pay for the cost of this small army of occupation he imposed a levy of 150,000 francs on the impoverished town—a sum out of all proportion to the means of its inhabitants. To make matters worse, the Turks and Koulouglis of the citadel, allies of the French, were forced to pay their share; and the culminating folly was the employment of a native Jew on the commission for collecting the money. In vain Mustapha attempted to reason with him. ‘Each citizen was called in turn before the collectors; he was told his quota and was bastinadoed until he had paid it. Frequently the same individual was summoned more than once, if there was reason to suspect that he still had something left. All this was done in the name of France, and the army was ashamed and indignant . . .’<sup>1</sup> Many men were forced to contribute their wives’ jewellery, which was undervalued and then disposed of at a profit in Algiers and elsewhere. At last Clauzel realized his mistake, cancelled the 55,000 francs still owing, and promised to subtract from the regular annual taxes the amount already paid. But it was too late; the harm had been done.

Abd el Kader was not slow in making full use of the situation. ‘If that is the way the French treat their friends,’ he cried, ‘what are their enemies to expect?’; and a wave of indignation swept across the province when it became known that a Jew had presided at the flogging of Mohammedans. The affair created an uneasiness in France which the lengthy *Explications* of Clauzel did little to remove. The Angad rose against the Christians, and the Koulouglis privately informed the Emir that they would hand over the citadel to him as soon as the main French force had been withdrawn. Ben Nouna, wealthy and influential *kaid* of Tlemcen, made vigorous propaganda far and wide, and enlisted the support of both Moors and Kabyles, while Abd el Kader, in order to win the fuller sympathy of the Sultan of Morocco, now adopted the title of ‘Khalifa of the Sultan’.

Clauzel realized that the revictualling of Tlemcen direct from Oran would inevitably be a hazardous affair. If he could open up

<sup>1</sup> Pellissier de Reynaud: *Annales Algériennes* (1854).

communication with Rachgoun, the land journey would be reduced to less than one half. On January 25, he struck north with 4,000 men; but Abd el Kader's spies had kept him informed, and after a two-day battle the French were only saved from severe defeat by the arrival of reinforcements from Tlemcen. Clauzel was obliged to retire, pursued to the very gates of the city by Arab cavalry; and Abd el Kader, in spite of appreciable losses, could claim a victory which powerfully affected the wavering allegiance of several tribes. The Arab leader now addressed appeals and proclamations to the faithful everywhere, even to the fringes of the Sahara, reminding them of the duty of all Mohammedans to unite against the Christians, and quoting from the *Hadiths* (reported sayings of Mohammed): 'The Mussulmans are like a body; if one of the members suffer, all the members suffer with it.' Victory must be theirs—victory or martyrdom.

Early in February Clauzel withdrew his main force, leaving in the citadel, under the command of a young captain named Cavaignac, the volunteers who were to hold that uncongenial fortress in the name of France—'five hundred prisoners condemned to remain within its walls, and themselves condemning the Oran garrison to feed them at intervals through the bars of the cage where they were imprisoned alive'.<sup>1</sup> Arab skirmishing parties tried, without much success, to hinder the return of the army to Oran. On the third day, 'at the moment when the fusillade was heaviest', wrote Pellissier de Reynaud, 'there occurred an incident of little importance in itself, but one which well proves the light-heartedness and similarity of character of the two peoples who were fighting one another. A boar, terrified by the noise of the firing, suddenly rushed between the French and Arab lines. The combatants immediately stopped shooting at one another and turned their fire against the newcomer, exchanging jokes as one might on a hunting party. When the animal had made good its escape, the firing reverted to its original targets.'

A few days later Clauzel set sail for Algiers, announcing that Abd el Kader was beaten and that 'the war was over'. Since the troops which had been sent from France for the Mascara campaign were soon to be recalled, he decided to make a last use of them in a demonstration tour through the Chélif. Towards the middle of March they set out under the command of General Perrégaux, and swept through the countryside exacting promises of allegiance

<sup>1</sup> Duc d'Orléans: *op. cit.*

from the terrified natives. A smaller force, under Clauzel himself, went to the assistance of the unhappy Bey of Médéa whose sphere of influence still extended little beyond the silo in which he had ignominiously gone to ground. He was brought out into the daylight, given rifles, ammunition and general encouragement, and then left to shift for himself. 'Our Bey's position,' said the official report, 'is now consolidated.' Abd el Kader's answer to this double challenge was not long delayed. No sooner had the French withdrawn than he appeared in the Chélif, overwhelmed the Bordjia (who had submitted to the French) and confiscated their lands and belongings. At the same time his partisans surprised Médéa, and captured its unfortunate Bey who was sent in chains to Morocco and there hanged.

Thus fared the unhappy allies of France. The whole blame for these muddles and failures cannot be laid at Clauzel's door, since he had neither the authority nor the troops to occupy new towns permanently. But he knew that he had many severe critics in France; and when the reserve regiments were recalled, he thought it advisable to go to Paris in order to defend his own interests against the smug, carping deputies who, from the comfort of their armchairs, directed the policy of the precarious little colony.

Before Clauzel sailed for France, he entrusted General d'Arlanges, now in charge at Oran, with a delicate mission—that of trying once more to open up communications between the island of Rachgoun and Tlemcen. For this purpose he was given 3,500 men; Clauzel himself had failed with 4,000. This time, however, the attempt was to be made from Rachgoun, using a fortified post on the mainland by the mouth of the Tafna.

Speed was essential; yet d'Arlanges set off at a leisurely pace from Oran. Half-way to the Tafna he made a three-day halt in order to construct (for reasons known to himself alone) a road up Mount Tessala. 'This road,' says d'Orléans, 'which could never be completed since it lead nowhere, had no advantage beyond that of shaking the superstitious beliefs of the Arabs about this mountain. But a pointless and incomplete work was a poor occupation for the troops and a pitiful spectacle for the natives, who were already only too used to our inconsequent methods.' The three wasted days just gave Abd el Kader and his allies time to prepare. The district was inhabited by fanatical Kabyles who soon began to swarm round the French column, and Mustapha rightly insisted upon the importance of dealing with these before advancing further. When

d'Arlanges refused, the old warrior, trusting to his instinct, attacked without orders and involved the French general against his will in a stiff but inconclusive skirmish. The column proceeded, and again Mustapha implored d'Arlanges to settle once and for all with these Kabyles. When argument was of no avail, he threw himself on the ground in front of the advancing troops. But his gesture, like his words, made no impression; the troops continued on their way, and reached the mouth of the Tafna without further incident.

Before starting to dig entrenchments, d'Arlanges made a reconnaissance in force to the west. At Sidi Yacoub, some six miles beyond the river, he was violently attacked by Abd el Kader. The Arabs surged forward, undaunted by their losses, to the very mouths of the cannon; and even El Yali, a famous Moroccan *marabout* who had declared himself to be impervious to French bullets, fell to a cannon-shot at point-blank range. D'Arlanges himself was wounded. Though Abd el Kader's losses were far heavier than those of the Christians, the latter were driven back to their camp, and Abd el Kader claimed a victory which was followed as usual by the submission of a number of tribes. The French troops, hemmed in by Arabs on the west and Kabyles on the east, were soon in a pitiable plight, and compelled to ignore the Emir's taunting challenge to come out and fight. For six weeks they remained there, crouching behind their hastily dug earthworks, unsheltered from the tropical rain and the blinding sun, tormented by vermin, half-starved, their clothes in rags. Every faggot brought in, every handful of grass gathered for the horses, invited the bullets of sharpshooters concealed among the shrubs. On June 6, the long awaited relief force of three Line Regiments under General Bugeaud arrived from France and moored at the mouth of the Tafna.

One of Bugeaud's secretaries has left us a portrait of the man whose name was for ever to be associated with the conquest of Algeria. He was fifty-two years old, tall, squarely built and uncommonly powerful. His face was plump, full of muscle, and slightly pitted with smallpox. His complexion was florid; his eyes light grey and piercing, but softened in ordinary life by an expression of kindly sympathy. His nose was slightly aquiline; his mouth rather large; his lips thin and smiling; his forehead powerful, and crowned with a very few hairs which rose in silvered spires.

Everything in him breathed the habit of command. His was an iron nature, greedy of fatigue, inaccessible to the infirmities of age.'

After taking part in the Peninsular War, Bugeaud had been retired in 1815 on half pay, and for fifteen years had devoted himself wholeheartedly to farming his estate at Excideuil. Peasant blood flowed in his veins (his grandfather had been a blacksmith), and all his life he loved the soil. The July Revolution saw him again on the active list, and in 1831 he had been promoted to the rank of brigadier and elected *député* for the department of the Dordogne. He soon became a conspicuous figure in the Chamber and a trusted friend of the King. He was an indefatigable worker, open to new ideas, but with a deep mistrust of civil authority; too pre-occupied with details which had better have been left to his subordinates; often pig-headed, often quarrelsome; a man who, as one of his contemporaries said of him, had '*quelques grandes qualités et une foule de petits défauts; un type assez original à une époque où les types sont rares*'.

Bugeaud's orders were to strengthen the Tafna post and to revivitual Tlemcen. Though a newcomer to Africa, he immediately decided upon a revolutionary change in tactics which shocked the *vieux Africains*—the wheeled convoy and field artillery, which had so limited the scope and reduced the speed of the army in previous campaigns, must be done away with. The old campaigners yielded with an ill grace to this innovation, and predicted disaster. To break down their prejudices, and to harden his new troops, Bugeaud marched with a small force to Oran along the coast, a route which was impossible to wheeled vehicles. Results fully justified the experiment. A week later Bugeaud arrived in Tlemcen without meeting much opposition, bringing temporary relief to the sickly garrison who had been living for weeks on half-rations of barley bread; and by the end of the month he was once more encamped by the mouth of the Tafna. His few casualties had been due more to the heat and the lack of water than to enemy action; Abd el Kader, rightly guessing that the main food convoy to Tlemcen was yet to come, was holding himself in reserve for a bigger prize.

At the beginning of July Bugeaud left the Tafna with his convoy. Abd el Kader watched his every movement; it was his plan to attack the French from two sides as they crossed the river Sikkak at a point a little above its confluence with the Isser. With his main force he waited on the plateau above the left bank of the



BATTLE OF THE SIKKAK July 1836  
From Fort Niagara *Algéne historique*



Sikkak, while his brother-in-law ben Thami, *Khalifa* of Mascara, was ready upon the other bank to attack the rear. Half the convoy was across the stream when ben Thami struck; but he was driven back, and the crossing safely effected. Then, with shouts and warcries, Abd el Kader surged down from the plateau with his cavalry and infantry. But they too were repulsed, and the Arab reserves failed to stem the retreat. As the convoy passed harmlessly on its way to Tlemcen, Bugeaud pursued the routed Arabs northwards towards the Isser. They reached the stream at a point where it was banked by vertical rocks nearly forty feet high. Then began a horrible carnage that I was unable to stop, do all I could,' reported Bugeaud to Marshal Maison. To escape certain death, these poor wretches flung themselves from the rock and were killed or horribly crippled by the fall. Soon they were deprived even of this miserable resource; our *chasseurs* and light troops found a passage and made their way into the bed of the river; the enemy were hemmed in on all sides, and the Douairs were able to gratify their horrible passion for cutting off heads. At last, by shouting and by striking with the flat of the sword, I succeeded in saving a hundred and thirty men of the regular infantry. I am going to send them to France. I think it is a good plan; humanity and policy will alike be satisfied. These Arabs will get ideas in France that may bear fruit in Africa.'

The battle of the Sikkak was a considerable victory. Abd el Kader had mustered his whole strength and gambled it in a pitched battle; he had suffered very heavy losses, and had himself narrowly escaped being taken prisoner when his favourite black horse, which had carried him at the Macta and saved him from the pursuit of Yusuf, was killed under him. But it was far from being final and conclusive; a week later, when Bugeaud demanded the submission of one of the neighbouring tribes he received the characteristic reply: We will only submit if the French continue to show themselves stronger than the Emir.'

Having carried out his mission, the general returned to France to make his report. In it he emphasized that only by the use of 'a system of mobile columns' could Abd el Kader finally be brought to bay.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONSTANTINE, 1836

THERE was no more picturesque figure in France's African army than Major Yusuf. Born in the island of Elba in 1805, he had been captured by corsairs on his way to Florence to finish his education. He was sold to the Bey of Tunis and, thanks to his intelligence and good looks, soon became a useful and decorative member of his corps of Mamelukes; and here he might have remained, if he had not been unwise enough to become involved in an amorous intrigue with the Bey's daughter. After pursuit and a miraculous escape he reached Algiers, where he was still living when the French captured the town in 1830. Brutal, absolutely fearless, more Turkish than the Turks among whom he had lived, he made himself invaluable to his new masters. He joined the French army and rapidly received promotion. When innocent tribes required massacring for propaganda purposes, he could be relied upon to do the work efficiently and without embarrassment. It was at one time his habit to cut off the ears of any prisoners he took, in order to make their identification easier if they escaped. This romantic ruffian, it may be mentioned in passing, played his cards so cleverly that he rose to the rank of general, was made a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, and married the niece of General Guilleminot. Even Alexandre Dumas fell for his charm, proclaimed him 'in private life one of the sweetest, the most refined, the most fascinating natures that I have ever known', and records in his *Le Véloce* a memorable evening spent with the general and his wife at their villa outside Algiers, feeding Madame Yusuf's ostriches with gloves and knotted handkerchiefs.

In 1836, when still a mere major in the spahis, Yusuf persuaded Clauzel, who had an almost pathetic confidence in him, to nominate him to the theoretically vacant *beylik* of Constantine.

Ahmed, Bey of Constantine, had been officially deposed by the French in 1830; but from his mountain fortress he continued to rule over some two million subjects. His authority was unchallenged throughout most of eastern Algeria; he received support

from Turkey and provisions from Tunis. He was quick-witted and forceful; but he had the usual Turkish failings—a passion for debauch and a tendency to let matters take their course. A much more remarkable man was his second-in-command, Ben Aissa, who had reorganized the *beylik* and who could be relied upon in moments of crisis to rouse his master from his lethargy.

Ahmed had become reconciled to the presence of the French in Bône; elsewhere his sphere of influence was undisturbed by the Christians who had been in no position to interfere further with him. He was not under the necessity, as was Abd el Kader, of founding an empire; he had his kingdom, and all he asked was to be left alone to enjoy it. But when Yusuf began raiding his territory, he realized that the Italian *condottiere* was not going to remain content with a merely nominal title, and that soon the French might be marching against his capital. In the west, Abd el Kader observed with profound satisfaction that events were about to rid him, with no trouble to himself, of his one serious rival.

Yusuf's terror raids upon unco-operative Kabyle tribes did not have the effect he intended. Though the Kabyles disliked the Turks, they had on the whole been reasonably well treated under Ahmed; and Yusuf's methods were not calculated to win men to his cause. But Yusuf wanted his *beylik*, and was prepared to have a gamble at some one else's expense. Undiscouraged, he urged Clauzel to march against Constantine, promised him a degree of native support which he knew he was quite unable to produce, and declared firmly that the town would surrender at the mere sight of a French soldier. Clauzel believed him.

The French government was less certain of the wisdom of the venture and, after months of hesitation, resorted to its usual half-measures by refusing to send the reinforcements for which Clauzel had asked, at the same time giving him grudging permission to act with what forces he could raise locally. 'I shall do what I can, as well as I can,' announced the Governor-General. 'I shall act with the materials I have, and trust to my lucky star'; and he withdrew the resignation which, in the first moment of disappointment, he had tendered. He had, in fact, made such an open secret of his intentions, that it was now too late to cancel the expedition without a dangerous loss of prestige. By transferring troops from Algiers and Oran, he managed to muster 7,400 men at Bône, the point from which the attack was to be made. To these were added

1,300 native soldiers, all that materialized of Yusuf's promised thousands. Of the rest, some had altogether refused to join the French; and the remainder, discouraged by the delays which they naturally attributed to weakness, had faded away again into the mountains. But it was generally understood that these latter would put in an appearance as soon as the army began its triumphal march.

At Dréan, about a dozen miles south of Bône, Clauzel had made a fortified camp which was mainly memorable for its lack of water, its general discomfort, and its well-earned nickname of '*le camp des puces*'. Ben Aissa had led raiding parties up to its very walls. Beyond Dréan, the Governor-General had not troubled to reconnoitre a yard of the ground. He had not the faintest conception of the difficulty of his task, which appeared to him in the light of a rather pleasant archæological expedition under military escort. Learned professors were attached to his staff to record the Roman inscriptions found on the way; draughtsmen were to be present to make picturesque sketches of ruins in the autumn sunshine. The gates of Constantine seemed in his imagination to be already half open, and the baggage contained a quantity of pamphlets, lithographed at Bône, which opened optimistically with the words '*Aujourd'hui le corps expéditionnaire entrera dans Constantine . . .*'

The first troops left Bône on November 8, and they left thankfully, for the place had become a plague-spot—'*affreux cloaque encombré de ruines et d'ordures*' was the duc d'Orléans' description of it.<sup>1</sup> Three weeks of unbroken rain, followed by a few days of sultry heat, had converted the waterlogged country round it into a hotbed of disease. The soldiers, who had been living in leaky tents or broken-down shacks, were easy victims of the fever germs. Soon two thousand men were sick and waiting their turn for admission into the utterly inadequate hospital where bucketfuls of sulphate of quinine, the only remedy available, killed more men than it saved.

As Yusuf had only managed to get some four or five hundred of the fifteen hundred mules he had promised to provide, and as the few available horses were old and decrepit, the army was insufficiently provided with both stores and artillery. Fourteen days' rations were taken, half of them being stored in the soldiers' packs which were already weighed down with ammunition. Every second man also carried a blanket which he was obliged to

<sup>1</sup> Though d'Orléans himself was not present during the campaign, he received an eye-witness account of it from his brother, the duc de Nemours.

share. Many of the soldiers were too weak to carry such loads, and these seized the opportunity to lighten them by eating most of their reserve rations on the first day, trusting for the future to the plenty which they had been told awaited them in Constantine. By way of artillery there was nothing heavier than a battery of eight-pounders—guns which were quite useless for siege purposes, but heavy enough to retard the march. It was, as d'Orléans pointed out, ‘too much for an open door; too little for a closed one’. The most bulky part of the convoy consisted of an immense quantity of brandy—enough for 128,000 rations—which was also destined to play its small but sinister part in this disastrous campaign.

The march began inauspiciously. Ahmed and Ben Aïssâ, seeing that climate and fever were doing their work for them, withdrew towards the stout defences of Constantine; and, in the absence of the enemy, discipline in the French army soon became lax. The troops straggled forward at their own speed, and at sunset they lay down and slept at whatever point they happened to have reached. During the first night a heavy thunderstorm broke, and the flocks which were to have provided fresh meat took fright and broke away in the darkness. Then the Arab mule-drivers deserted with eighty of the mules. The next morning the over-loaded wagons stuck in the mud, and had to be lightened by throwing away much of the engineering equipment (including the scaling-ladders), as well as the oats for the horses. During the crossing of a flooded river a number of horses were drowned. On October 10 the advance guard reached Guelma, where a hundred thousand rounds of ammunition had to be left behind, together with nearly three hundred new fever cases. To many of the officers the certain failure of the expedition had now become obvious; but Clauzel remained confident as ever.

Worse was to come. The last troops had left Bône on October 13, and five days later the whole army reached Ras-el-Akba, a sharp and difficult ascent leading to the bare, windswept plateau which stretched to Constantine. Here there was no wood of any kind, and the soldiers were reduced to uncooked food, and, for their bivouac fires, to the momentary glow of a handful of thistles. Owing to the absence of reconnaissance the way was often lost. Two days later, in a violent blizzard which lasted for thirteen hours, the army camped by the ruins of the Roman mausoleum of Souma. That night twenty men were frozen to death.

At dawn the sky cleared, and for a few moments the fickle sunlight provided the first tantalizing glimpse of the old Numidian fortress of Constantine. It hung suspended above the valley mists, deceptively near—the glittering goal of so much labour and suffering. Silhouetted against the western horizon could be seen the retreating cohorts of Ahmed's cavalry which seemed, like a will-o'-the-wisp, to beckon the tired soldiers onwards.

A few weary miles still lay ahead. In crossing the swollen Oued-Akmimin more horses were lost, until at last an easier ford was discovered. Here the soldiers, joining together in the *Marseillaise* and *La Parisienne*, plunged into the icy water to their armpits; and though many fell, the heroism of the mounted officers won the passage without loss of life. Clauzel, with his staff and a small escort, now rode on ahead towards Constantine to receive, so he fondly imagined, the deputation which would come out to him with the keys of the city.

Constantine, frowning, terrible in its natural strength, is built like an eagle's nest upon a high, rocky plateau. Nearly a thousand feet below rages the mountain torrent of the Rummel. On three sides the cliffs rise almost vertically from the narrow gorge; only on the south-west, the wall of rock gives place to a narrow tongue of land joining the town to the slopes of the Coudiat-Aty hill. But for this one vulnerable spot, Constantine would be another Gibraltar, to be carried only by starvation or by prolonged battering by cannon-fire. To the east the town is dominated by the Mansourah plateau; and to the north-east the ravine is spanned by the El-Kantera bridge, built by the Romans upon the foundations of a natural arch of rock. This was the city which, as Cirta, the Numidian kings had made their capital; which Constantine had rebuilt and renamed in the fourth century; and which in its long history had known a hundred and sixty sieges. *Neque propter naturam loci Cirtam armis expugnare Jugurtha poterat*, wrote Sallust; yet more than once Constantine had been starved into surrender. From the seventh century onwards, Arabs and Turks had repeatedly sacked and looted it; all too soon it was to receive its *coup-de-grâce* from the 'municipal improvements' of the French, an operation which removed the last traces of its earlier culture and civilization.

The wary Ahmed had chosen to encamp in the mountains, leaving Ben Aissa in command of the town. The Bey might waver, but his faithful lieutenant never doubted the strength of his defences. Clauzel, as he looked across the valley at the vast red

banners which floated defiantly from the gates of the town, understood suddenly that he had failed—that the army had virtually been defeated before the first shot had been fired. How could he hope to storm that formidable natural fortress manned by stout hearts and amply provisioned? Of his own small army more than half were sick and all were cold and hungry. His eight-pounders were almost useless for breaching; he was short of ammunition and food; and most of his siege materials had been left behind. *Il faut recourir à la force, et la force me manque déjà,*' he exclaimed bitterly. Only one faint hope remained, a chance in a million—the surprise effect of a *coup-de-main*; and Clauzel, who with all his faults was no coward, decided, for the honour of the army, to take the risk.

His first task was to transfer some of his men to the Coudiat-Aty. This manœuvre involved crossing the flooded torrent of the Rummel, an undertaking already dangerous enough, but one which would daily become more hazardous. It was not carried out without a number of casualties, and French heads were soon to be seen impaled upon the ramparts. Shrill cries from the women greeted these first trophies and urged their warriors to yet greater efforts.

The roles of besieged and besiegers were now reversed: while the besieged were free to sally from the town as often as they wished, the besiegers found themselves virtually blockaded. Every movement made by the French was harassed by Turkish cavalry. On the Mansourah, no sooner had Clauzel erected his battery than it was overturned by enemy fire. With his men utterly exhausted and most of his horses killed, he did not even attempt to place a battery upon the Coudiat-Aty.

All that night an icy wind howled across the shelterless plateau, a wind against which clothes afforded no protection. In the early hours of the morning four inches of snow fell. The soldiers, who hardly cared now whether they lived or died, risked their lives for a few twigs which, even when found, could not be made to burn. Yet danger awoke in them a new courage; and when Ben Aissa's cavalry charged over the fresh snow thinking to meet with no opposition from these living corpses, the Frenchmen seized their weapons in their frozen hands and drove them back. The bravery of his soldiers was the one thing upon which Clauzel had not wholly counted in vain.

At last a battery was successfully placed in position on the side of the Mansourah less than a quarter of a mile from the El-Kantera;

and in spite of the smallness of its cannon it managed to do some damage to the outer gate of the double gateway. But the soldiers who had been detailed to conduct the convoy on to the plateau were too exhausted to get the wagons out of the mud in which they had stuck fast. Before abandoning them, the miserable wretches staved open the barrels of brandy. As they lay in a drunken stupor the Turks fell upon them and killed more than a hundred men.

Clauzel's forlorn hope was a twofold surprise attack—the one across the El-Kantara bridge, the other from the Coudiat-Aty against the El-Djebia gate. To discover the extent of the damage done to the El-Kantara gateway a detachment of sappers was sent out that night. It was characteristic of the ill-luck which dogged the expedition, that at the precise moment when bad weather would have helped the attackers, a bright moon broke suddenly through the clouds. The soldiers, who were half-way across the bridge, found themselves caught in a hail of fire. But in spite of many casualties the inspection was carried out; and the sappers were able to report that though the outer gate had been wrenched off its hinges, the inner still held firm. There was neither time nor ammunition enough for this to be destroyed by cannon-fire; it would have to be mined.

Another day passed—a day during which the enemy made repeated sallies from the town, while squadrons of cavalry from the neighbouring hills harassed the French rear. The slackening fire of the French guns was due, the Turks rightly guessed, to the fact that ammunition had become almost as scarce as food. But the sun was shining, and courage returned when it was whispered that the supreme moment was at hand. Sappers were busy rigging up scaling-ladders from the woodwork of derelict wagons; the last of the powder was put into sacks. Under heavy fire from the town a rifleman was swimming across the swollen river with despatches for General de Rigny tied in a handkerchief above his head.

Night fell, and silence. Only the voice of the *muezzin* floated across the moonlit valley as the Frenchmen, under the command of General Trézel, crept towards the bridge. The attack had been ordered for midnight. Its failure was complete, for in the dazzling moonlight the Turkish musketeers could hardly miss their mark. All the men carrying the scaling-ladders were killed. Those with the powder met the same fate, and in the confusion their sacks were

trampled underfoot. Trézel, shot through the neck, fell unconscious. Orders wrongly given (or wrongly understood) brought about a dangerous congestion upon the narrow bridge; and Colonel Hecquet, who had taken over the command, saw that only one course was left open to him. He gave the order to retreat.

The attack made simultaneously from the Coudiat-Aty failed equally. Here too there were easy targets and sharp-eyed marks-men upon the walls; here, too, the powder was lost in the confusion. Against the stoutly-built gates the two mountain howitzers were totally ineffective; and the brave men who rushed forward with axes were struck down as they attempted their impossible undertaking.

To Clauzel now fell the hardest task of all—that of leading the remains of his shattered army back to Bône. Sick, hungry, disillusioned men, exposed constantly to the attacks of a triumphant enemy whose fire they could hardly afford to return, had to be marched across more than a hundred miles of difficult country.

No sooner was it certain that the French were retreating, than the whole population of Constantine, men and women, surged out of the gates. The destruction of materials which could not be carried back was interrupted. Even some of the wounded, for whom no place could be found upon the remaining wagons, had to be left behind where they lay, and here they met their death in cold blood at the hands of the pitiless amazons of Constantine.

One episode of that terrible day will live for ever in French history. To Major Changarnier fell the honour of covering the retreat. Forming his men into a square, he withheld his fire until the oncoming hordes of Arab cavalry were within thirty yards of his ranks. ‘There are six thousand of them and two hundred and fifty of us,’ he cried, ‘it is an even chance. Long live the King! Fire!’ The charge was broken.

In face of every probability the army, helped by the fine weather and fortified by the unquenchable courage and renewed optimism of the Commander-in-Chief, succeeded in fighting its way back. A week later, more dead than alive, the troops reached Bône where some three thousand men entered the hospitals. Twelve hundred of these died, while more than a hundred soldiers were killed, and many hundreds injured, by an explosion in the powder factory.

So ended this tragic campaign in which nature, no less than the Turks, had brought about the humiliation of the French army.

While Ahmed was proudly pinning to his breast the order of Nitcham Iftihat conferred upon him by the Sultan in reward for his (or rather Ben Aïssa's) signal services against the infidels, Clauzel was on his way to Paris to give an account of his conduct. He never returned to Algeria; and in February, 1837, General Damrémont was appointed to succeed him as Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in Africa.

## CHAPTER X

### THE TAFNA TREATY

WHILE France was ringing with the news of her humiliation and the unhappy Clauzel watched the last white glow of Algiers fade on the southern horizon, Abd el Kader was making the best possible use of the opportunities which the French had placed in his hands. He stirred up the Hadjoutes to lay waste the country round Algiers; he organized revolts in the west; and negotiated a highly favourable contract with General Brossard, who now commanded at Oran, by which he received arms and ammunition from the French in exchange for corn. Brossard had even been prevailed upon to return the Arab prisoners taken at the battle of Sikkak. Some rather shifty transactions on the part of the French general gave rise later to the celebrated trial from which even Bugeaud's reputation did not emerge untarnished, and from which Brossard, though acquitted on appeal, passed into a debtors' prison.

It was imperative for France to wipe out the disgrace of Constantine. Though the Chamber favoured prudence, and the cautious Damrémont could be relied upon to do nothing rash, Clauzel's headstrong conduct had left the French army with a debt which had to be repaid. But to avenge Constantine, France needed the assurance of peace in the west. It was at this juncture that Bugeaud volunteered to approach Abd el Kader and to attempt to negotiate a treaty. His distinguished record, and the King's high opinion of him, made the government decide to accept his offer. The essentials laid down as a basis of discussion were that Abd el Kader should acknowledge the sovereignty of France, and that his rule should be confined to the province of Oran. As a result of characteristic mismanagement Damrémont arrived at Algiers with no knowledge of Bugeaud's mission, a confusion which led to some unpleasantness between the two men.

Two days later, on April 5, Bugeaud landed at Oran. His first intention was to make a show of strength; but Duran having given him to understand that the Emir also wished for peace, he

concluded that he could secure reasonable terms without having to fight for them. He therefore wrote to the Emir stating his terms. Abd el Kader needed peace too; and public opinion demanded it, especially when the Sikkak prisoners returned with favourable accounts of their treatment in French hands. But Bugeaud's suggestions, the Emir pointed out, were not acceptable as they stood. The province of Tittery had joined him of its own free will, and he did not propose to give it up. Bugeaud on consideration agreed to this, although in doing so he was acting contrary to the orders he had received; but he stipulated that the Emir should pay an annual tribute of corn and cattle. The Emir in reply now claimed the province of Algiers with exception of the town and its immediate neighbourhood.

Finding that the Emir was insatiable in his demands, Bugeaud again thought of resorting to arms; but when he came to consider the means at his disposal he saw that it was impossible. Meanwhile Abd el Kader at a meeting of chiefs was discussing how far he should yield to French pressure. Some of the *marabouts* were still in favour of continuing the Holy War, but they were outvoted. At last, after a short truce and a further exchange of views, the Treaty of Tafna was signed on May 30.

The French text of the treaty stated firstly that the Emir recognized French sovereignty in Africa. In the province of Oran the French were to keep Mostaganem, Mazagran, Oran and Arzew; in that of Algiers 'Algiers, the Sahel, the Mitidja Plain as far as the river Kaddara and beyond,' Blida and Koléa. The Emir was to rule over the provinces of Oran and Tittery, and the rest of that of Algiers. In return for territory ceded by Abd el Kader near Algiers, he was to receive Rachgoun and Tlemcen. Trade was to be free, and the Emir might buy war materials in France. He was to 'give' France a stipulated quantity of cattle and fodder (there was no suggestion of 'annual tribute'). France might appoint agents to the towns of the Emir's dominions, and vice versa.

The Arabic text, the only version to which Abd el Kader affixed his seal, differed from the French in at least one important particular: no mention was made of the Emir's recognition of French sovereignty in Africa; and in place of this clause appeared the vague and non-committal statement 'The Commander of the Faithful recognizes that the (French) Sultan is great.' Since one of the interpreters, a Syrian, knew hardly any French, and the other was

the scoundrelly Ben Duran, the discrepancy was not surprising. Even in the French version the phrase 'as far as the river Kaddara . . . and beyond' was obviously without meaning, while the corresponding word in the Arabic '*fauq*' (above) was almost as ambiguous.

In almost every respect the treaty exceeded the conditions laid down in France; yet it was ratified in Paris. Bugeaud pleaded in its favour that it gave the Emir little that he did not already possess. In reality it was a disaster: Abd el Kader, with two thirds of Algeria in his power, could now pose to the world as the friend and ally of France; and the French, by giving up the citadel of Tlemcen and the territory of the Douairs, showed the whole country how they rewarded the faithful services of their allies. 'France has climbed a bit too low in consenting to treat with a miserable little *marabout* . . . Bugeaud has been woefully befooled' one of the French officers jotted down in his diary. The treaty, in fact, had only one advantage for France—it afforded her a breathing-space in which to collect her strength and attack Constantine.

Neither Bugeaud nor any other of the French generals who had served in Africa had ever succeeded in obtaining a personal interview with the Emir; but now, for reasons of his own, Abd el Kader consented to a meeting being arranged. It was to take place on the day following the signing of the treaty, at a point on the Tafna about a third of the way from the French camp to the Arab.

The French were up early; by nine o'clock they were on the spot. Bugeaud had made up his mind to impress the Arabs, and he at once set about disposing his six battalions of infantry, his cavalry and his artillery to best advantage. The band was to play, salutes would be fired as the young Arab chieftain advanced . . . Bugeaud, with his usual thoroughness, had thought it all out. So had the Emir.

The stage was set; the French waited. It was a desolate spot, covered with dwarf palm and sparse, low-growing shrub. There was no shade; and as the hours passed, the sun blazed down with growing fierceness. Tight-buttoned uniforms and heavy shakos became increasingly intolerable. Noon came, and still they waited. Vague grumblings were now giving place to coherent sarcasm; and Bugeaud, to avoid hearing it, lay down in the sun and tried to sleep. At two o'clock a horseman appeared on the horizon, and

by the hand and lifted him up. He is not very heavy,' he added amid general laughter.

While they had been talking, the setting sun had vanished behind a bank of clouds. The evening was very sultry. As Abd el Kader galloped off with his escort, a sudden, tremendous clap of thunder echoed and re-echoed among the mountains, drowning the frenzied enthusiasm of the fifteen thousand yelling Arab horsemen.

In camp that night Bugeaud was silent and thoughtful. He had, it was true, satisfied an idle curiosity; alone of French generals he had seen the redoubtable Emir face to face. But as he looked back upon the events of the day, he must have been conscious that the role he had been made to play had not been a particularly glorious one. In Abd el Kader's camp no one doubted that the French general and his escort had come to pay homage to the Emir. The French general had helped the Emir to rise—in the east the act of a menial. Abd el Kader's coldly calculated delays and his studied insolence had done immeasurable service to the Arab cause. Once more a French commander had pitted his wits against the Emir, and had lost.

Did Bugeaud already begin to doubt the advantages of his ill-calculated treaty? We do not know; but there was at any rate one Frenchman in Africa who from the first had seen the folly of it, and that was Damrémont. 'The treaty is not favourable,' he wrote, 'because it makes the Emir more powerful than a brilliant victory in the field could ever have done, and it places us in a precarious position, without guarantees, and completely hemmed in; it is not honourable, because our right of sovereignty rests on nothing, and we leave our allies in the lurch; it is not necessary, because all we needed to do was to establish ourselves firmly in the Mitidja and round Oran and to make ourselves unassailable there until we saw what was going to happen.' Old Mustapha ben Ismaël understood too. 'Now I have nothing more to do than to go to Mecca and do penance at the Kaabah for having trusted the French,' he cried when he heard that Bugeaud had made peace; and he bowed his grey head with shame.



THE FRENCH ARMY APPROACHING CONSTANTINE, 1836  
From a Lithograph by Reffet  
(Photo Pion)



## CHAPTER XI

### CONSTANTINE, 1837

MJAZ AMAR lies in the mountains some forty miles, as the crow flies, south-west of Bône. In the summer of 1837 it was a mere point upon the map; by September it had become the headquarters of twelve thousand French soldiers, the rallying-point for the attack on Constantine which was to wipe out the ignominy of the previous year's defeat.

Once more the start had been dangerously postponed, and the weather, no longer an ally, might at any moment declare itself on the side of the enemy. Ahmed had worked prodigies of oriental diplomacy in his efforts to play for time; but in any case the French had not been in a position to start sooner. Almost the whole of the army and equipment had to be formed afresh; and when one of the regiments arrived from France with cholera, there were further delays until it had been replaced. All through September convoys filed along the valleys leading to Mjaz Amar. At night tents were pitched close together, and woe to the soldiers who wandered too far from the camp. '*Prends garde aux perroquiers!*' some one would cry when water had to be fetched from the streams where pink-flowering oleanders as likely as not concealed an Arab or Kabyle sharpshooter.

The French soldiers had transformed Mjaz Amar. The melancholy valley, tangled and desolate, had been partially cleared of undergrowth. Here gleamed white tents; there rose huts with roofs, walls and uprights of green-leaved nut branches. Bowers of feathery green connected these huts, which were used as mess-rooms by the officers. The whole scene, observed Wagner,<sup>1</sup> was like a French park. A regular village of sutlers' huts had sprung up, run for the most part by Maltese adventurers who shared the hardships of the campaign in the hope of gain; and at the *Café de la Gloire* and other auspiciously named coffee-stalls and gin-shops the soldiers drank their slender pay or gambled it away to

<sup>1</sup> A German naturalist who was with the army, and whose notes were used by Pulszky (*op. cit.*).

the accompaniment of endless bottles of *vin rouge*. ‘I never saw one of them resting long in the same place,’ wrote Wagner. ‘There is a peculiar restlessness in the French soldier. It would be a torture for him to sit for one hour over a bottle of wine, at the same table, and in the same company. In the coffee-houses there is a continual in-and-out flowing of guests; in the open air the fires are kindled and the pans are bubbling. Some of the soldiers look for crawfish in the brooks, or seek for tortoises in the meadows; others shoot partridges or boars; others, again, look out for cactus-figs, or dig for the roots of the dwarf-palm, whilst their comrades prepare the dainties for supper, always chatting and singing and moving about.’ But this Eden had its drawbacks. Fever and dysentery were working havoc with the health of the army. Of the sixteen thousand men chosen for the expedition, four thousand lay ill in hospital. The wooden barracks at Mjaz Amar were soon filled to overflowing, and the provision wagons carried away the sick as back-freight to Bône.

The Kabyles kept ceaseless watch from the hills. They could not understand why the French waited. They were home-loving people, who only wanted to kill the Christians and then return to their families. Early in September Ahmed, who saw that they were getting restless, led an attack against the French outposts; but he was driven off and retired to his rock-girt capital to put the last touches to its defences.

The French army was led by the Governor-General in person. Damrémont was about fifty years old, calm, cautious, collected, rather chilly in manner, but an agreeable conversationalist. His men, though they admired his courage, did not really like him. Changarnier found him ‘*un honnête homme médiocre*’, and added that but for an ambitious wife he would never have reached high office. He could grasp a situation clearly; but his strategy was open to criticism, and the credit for the organization of the campaign must mainly be given to his Chief of Staff and intimate friend, the merry-eyed General Perrégaux and, by the nature of the operation, to General Valée who commanded the artillery which this time included heavy cannon.

Brave La Moricière was there too, in command of the Zouaves which he had made the finest regiment in the French army. A day or two before the army marched, a cheerful group of diners might have been seen in his tent, which, characteristically enough, was near the most advanced outposts. Besides some of his brother



FIRST ATTACK ON CONSTANTINE, 1836

From a painting by Paul Fort in the Versailles Museum

(Photo M. N. Versailles)



officers he had invited one or two of the little group of foreigners and civilians who accompanied the expedition. Wagner and his Swiss friend Muralt were present, and perhaps the English 'milord' Sir Grenville Temple; Berbrugger, the Algiers' librarian was certainly one of the number, and so was Captain Levaillant, son of the African explorer, the best shot in the army. Such parties in relatively comfortable tents with well-dressed tables had formed a feature of camp life; and over good claret the conversation was the livelier in the recollection that soon the amenities of civilization were to be exchanged for the rigours of the campaign, for mud and cold, for the flashing steel of Arab knives and the deadly hail of Turkish bullets. The talk, naturally enough, turned mostly upon Constantine.

'If the rains begin,' said one of the officers, 'we shall not be able to transport the siege-guns.'

'It will not rain,' answercd La Moricière firmly. With all his experience of Algeria he still trusted that treacherous climate.

'But,' said Wagner, 'even if we get our twenty-four-pounders to the spot, the result is not so certain, judging by what I have heard of the strong position of Constantine. If Ahmed has dug fortified trenches opposite the Coudiat-Aty we shall need more than a week to destroy the works. Powder and ammunition may give out before the breach is practicable. Perhaps the first storming will fail. You know how obstinately the Turks defend themselves behind walls and ditches. Remember St. Jean d'Acre, which is not so strong as Constantine; remember what the Russians had to face at Ibraïl, Varna and Salistra.'

'I know all about the Russo-Turkish War,' replied La Moricière. 'I have studied every detail of it; and I know that French soldiers are better than Russian. I wager twenty bottles of champagne against two that Constantine will fall within a week.'

Wagner cheerfully accepted the bet.

The army marched on October 1. The way leading to Constantine was as dreary as ever, a winding track lying between bare hills; and the soldiers, weighed down by heavy haversacks and provision packs, had in addition to carry firewood. Though the sun shone, the ascent was at first wet and slippery, and progress slow. This time the five days' march was made in good weather; but the nights were cold. Tents had been left behind at Mjaz Amar, and not more than forty persons in the whole army slept

under cover. At night the soldiers lay huddled together for warmth; but they slept soundly in spite of the cold wind and the heavy dews. Temple liked to rise before dawn from the comparative comfort of his small tent and study the vast, silent scene spread out under the cold starlight. The eastern sky grows paler. Then suddenly 'a beat or two is heard from the head-quarter guard, and the next moment the drums of the nearest regiment beat *la Diane*. The call is taken up by others, by the trumpets of the cavalry and artillery, by the full bands of many corps; simple though the tune is, there is none more beautiful or more stirring. As the strains of music grow still louder, the great multitude, motionless but a moment before, start to their feet. Fires blaze more brightly; the clang of arms, the words of command, the neighing of horses, are heard in all directions; everywhere there is life, noise, and activity. For the moment, hardships, fatigue and privations are forgotten; the blood circulates more warmly, more quickly; the mind is occupied with what is to be done, with the hopes that the coming day may bring with it opportunities for gaining distinction. You wonder how, only a moment before, you could have been feeling romantic. Soup is hurriedly swallowed, and you spring into the saddle; the column is formed; the bands strike up a lively tune. You think, perhaps, of some girl with whom you have danced; with a light heart you sing as you march. Meanwhile stars and moon have vanished, and the sun rises in all its splendour. . . .<sup>1</sup>

It was hot marching along the treeless valleys under the unbroken blue of the sky. No life seemed to stir in those mountains, though the distant roar of a lion could sometimes be heard at night; but thousands of white-headed vultures circled ominously overhead. Even the Kabyles hardly gave sign of life at first, for Ahmed had concentrated all his hope of resistance in the capital. But the soldiers were in good spirits. Round the bivouacs they chatted and sang, discussed politics as Frenchmen ever will, recalled scenes from the Brittany or the Gascony which now seemed so remote, or watched the strange, incomprehensible antics of the native soldiers as they bowed their bearded heads to Allah with mumbled prayers while the sun dropped behind the hills. Long after the Frenchmen were asleep, the Arabs, squatting round their campfires, continued their interminable gutteral songs of love and adventure.

<sup>1</sup> I have ventured to amend Temple's English, which is tiresomely continental in style.

The artist Leblanc, who accompanied the expedition, certainly found no lack of material for his pencil.

On the fifth day the army reached Souma where, as their predecessors had done, they caught their first glimpse of Constantine. But the fortress was soon hidden again from view. In the evening Ahmed's cavalry began harassing the army's left flank, but to little effect. Temple noticed an Arab chief in a red *burnous* and wide-brimmed hat covered with ostrich feathers who fought with considerable bravery, and whose richly mounted gun and fine black horse he greatly coveted.

That night the army camped about an hour's march from Constantine. They woke to find that the dreaded rains had begun. After 'a very innocent skirmish in which scarcely any one was ruffled' the troops climbed to the *marabout* of Sidi el Mabruk on the slopes of the Mansourah, which, as in 1836, was to be used as staff head-quarters. Whitened bones and the shattered fragments of wagons strewed the way—grizzly reminders of the terrible campaign of the previous year. The army halted, and the Commander-in-Chief galloped on, up the hill to the top of the plateau.

All at once the town, which since Souma had been lost behind hills, burst into view. 'Beautiful and magical was the effect when, suddenly pulling up our horses on the very brink of the deep ravine which separated us from it, the whole town of Constantine, its mosques, its citadel and its batteries, burst suddenly on our sight, lying there apparently at our feet—silent and tranquil as in a time of profound peace—as if perfectly unconscious that eleven thousand men were close to her walls for the sole purpose of destroying her.' Grey houses with red-brick roofs—not the dazzling white of Algiers, Wagner noticed—crowned the vast, rocky headland, broken here and there by the silver of the minarets and the velvet green of the cypresses. For a few moments only, the sinister silence continued; then the huge anthill sprang suddenly to life. There came the roar of artillery. Clouds of smoke poured from the embrasures; muskets flashed from windows and terraces; battlecries echoed from the bastions. The women—white, ghost-like figures—climbed on to the roofs of the houses and began uttering shrill ululations to rouse their warriors to battle frenzy. Immense red banners emblazoned with two-edged swords were run up above the towers over the gates, and added their defiant challenge. From the summits of the minarets came the voices of the *muezzins*.

Even the cocks were crowing; and the whole pandemonium of sound was magnified and repeated by the great sounding-boards formed by the rocky escarpments of the ravine.

The generals stood on the brink of the precipice without speaking. At last the Prince de la Moskowa whispered with a shudder: 'This is the home of the devil!' At that moment a cannon-ball passed between Damrémont and the duc de Nemours who were standing only a few feet apart; then a bomb exploded less than thirty paces behind them. The Commander-in-Chief ordered every one to retire; but he himself remained there, fearless, gazing through his telescope as the shots fell round him and the rain poured down from a leaden sky.

Ahmed, though he had cleared away the small suburb which had masked the approach from the Coudiat-Aty, had not troubled to entrench the ground, but relied on the strength of the walls and fortified gates. No doubt, also, he expected that the main attack would again be made across the El-Kantera bridge where he had erected a formidable barricade. Though he still boasted that Constantine was impregnable, he himself had once more chosen to encamp with some eight thousand of his troops among the hills to the west of it, leaving Ben Aïssa in command of the town.

Damrémont had decided to erect batteries on the Mansourah plateau, so that he could silence the cannon on the Kasbah and south-eastern walls before beginning to breach the walls opposite the Coudiat-Aty. These preliminary operations—the process of 'softening up', as we should call it in the hideous jargon of to-day—took nearly a week, and were ceaselessly hampered by driving rains which soon converted the low-lying ground into a quagmire, by determined sorties of the town garrison, by sickness and exhaustion, and by the growing shortage of food, cannon-balls and cartridges. Time and ammunition became at last more precious assets than human lives. The erection of the batteries was fraught with endless difficulties. The platforms, built on ledges of rock, had to be levelled with stones. The parapets were formed of sandbags which were passed by a chain of infantrymen from the valley. Filled with mud rather than earth, the sacks were often almost empty before they reached the gun sites.

On the third day the batteries on the Mansourah opened fire. By noon they had almost silenced the enemy's guns, and in the afternoon it became safe to move the fever hospital and more of the soldiers up to the terrace from the lower ground which by now

was completely flooded. The fever hospital presented a terrible sight. Some of the men lay in wagons, but many were stretched on the ground, soaked to the skin, half covered with mud, and stiff and frozen with cold. Surgeons, wading up to their knees in the swamp, did what was possible to ease the sufferings of these miserable men. There was no shortage of medical supplies, but under such appalling conditions they were of little avail. At night the darkness was made more fearful by the delirious cries of the dying, and each morning rigid corpses were dragged out of the oozing morass—the bodies of men whose lives might easily have been saved could they have been given the shelter of a roof and a little warmth.

That evening Damrémont began to transfer some of the guns from the plateau to the Coudiat-Aty. At any time the operation would have been a hard one, and Clauzel had not attempted it with far lighter cannon; under existing conditions the difficulties appeared almost insuperable. In the darkness and the driving rain a descent of five hundred feet had to be made over ground so slippery that a practised climber could hardly keep a foothold; then followed the crossing of the Rummel, now a roaring torrent obstructed by huge pieces of rock; finally came the hardly less difficult ascent of the Coudiat-Aty. Bernhard, a Saxon artillery officer who accompanied the army, surveyed the ground and declared the task impossible.

Yet it was achieved. While the engineers were building ramps down the slopes of the Mansourah, infantrymen cleared the rocks from the river-bed. For twelve hours, up to their waists in the icy water, these men worked on in the darkness. As dawn broke, suddenly and without twilight, two of the ammunition wagons were still lying in the river-bed; forty horses and a couple of hundred infantrymen were trying to hoist one of the twenty-four-pounders up the narrow, mountain path; and the other guns were not yet in position. The fire from the town walls, till now spasmodic and inaccurate, became concentrated and deadly. Some of the horses stampeded; and one of the guns, breaking loose, rolled back into the valley. But by seven o'clock, after fourteen hours of unremitting toil, the herculean task was accomplished, and the batteries were in position. The siege had reached its second phase.

Damrémont was fully confident that the garrison would now surrender, but he had underestimated their tenacity. '*C'était se*

*tromper sur la nature des Arabes qui sont capables, non de tout faire, mais de tout souffrir,*' wrote a young French captain. On the contrary, they made a determined sortie during the day, and the following night they fired incessantly at a French breaching battery which had been set up only a hundred and thirty yards from the town walls. To the French every ball was precious, and as long as darkness continued they held their fire. Hopes rose in the town, and it was generally believed that the French were about to withdraw altogether.

But daylight brought disillusionment. In the morning, accurate fire temporarily silenced the guns opposite the Coudiat-Aty; and at two o'clock the breaching began, Valée himself aiming the first ball. For the first time since the beginning of the siege the town was silent; for the first time the rain clouds lifted, and the autumn sun broke through. Damrémont, anxious to spare bloodshed, now sent a summons to the town to surrender. The letter was carried by a young Turkish volunteer serving with the French, who was hoisted up by ropes on to the battlements. The reply it elicited left no doubt that the garrison were prepared to fight: 'If the Christians are short of powder we will send them some; if they are short of biscuits they may share ours. But so long as one of us remains alive they shall not enter Constantine.' '*Voilà de braves gens!*' exclaimed Damrémont; '*eh bien, l'affaire n'en sera que plus glorieuse pour nous*'; and he rode off with his staff to the Coudiat-Aty.

With his habitual disregard of danger, the Commander-in-Chief dismounted at an exposed point in full view of the breach. General Rullière, who stood beside him, pointed out the risk he was running. '*C'est égal,*' answered Damrémont calmly. At that instant a ball struck him and he fell dead. A moment later Perrégaux, bending over the lifeless body of his friend, was mortally wounded by a musket bullet, and Rullière received a wound in the cheek. The duc de Nemours, who had been appointed commander of the siege, did not move until the Commander-in-Chief's body had been carried away, though the rest of the staff hastened to take cover. Valée, veteran of the Empire and the senior general present, at once took over the command. Damrémont's death was soon forgotten. His men had known him too little to miss him much; many of his officers were partisans of Clauzel, and though they admired his heroism, they did not feel, as they did with Perrégaux, that they had lost a friend.

By evening the breach was more than ten yards wide, and it

was considered feasible to attempt the assault at daybreak the following morning. The defenders of the town, conscious at last of their danger, sent an emissary to ask for a truce. ‘It is too late now,’ replied Valée; ‘we will only negotiate inside Constantine.’

That night the Commander-in-Chief sent for La Moricière.

‘Colonel, if we are not masters of the town by ten o’clock to-morrow morning, at noon we must retreat.’

‘*Mon général*,’ answered La Moricière, ‘to-morrow by ten o’clock we shall be masters of the town, or dead.’

During the night the garrison tried to repair the walls with beams of wood and sandbags, but two French volunteers who crept out in the moonlight to examine the ground, reported that the breach was practicable. The three assault columns, under La Moricière, Combe and Corbin, waited impatiently. A new catch phrase—battle-cry for the day—passed along the ranks: ‘*En-foncé, Mahomet! Jésus-Christ prend la semaine!*’ (Mahomet is done for! Jesus Christ is orderly officer this week.)

Friday, October 13! The sun rose golden in a cloudless sky. In the city the *muezzins* were chanting from the minarets, while below in the squares the women, children and old men responded in chorus. On the parapets the hawk-eyed Turks fingered the triggers of their rifles. By seven o’clock the French had only five cannon-balls left, and a last salvo was fired, throwing up a cloud of dust round the breach.

‘Whenever you like, Colonel,’ whispered the duc de Nemours to La Moricière.

‘Up, zouaves! Follow me!’

The Foreign Legion sounded the storming march; the other regimental bands joined in. From the Arabs and Kabyles encamped among the hills came a fearful, piercing cry which for a moment drowned the drums and the trumpets. A minute or two later the first column was in the breach.

Now appeared unforseen difficulties; a second wall obstructed the approach to the town, a wall bristling with snipers who fired relentlessly down upon the heads of the attackers. ‘Scaling-ladders!’ shouted some one; and soon ladders, axes and ropes were on the spot. At that moment a large piece of the wall, undermined by the defenders, fell, burying forty Frenchmen beneath its ruins. But the advantage, in the long run, was to the attacking column who, swarming over the débris, found themselves at the entrance of a narrow, winding street.

A quarter of an hour had passed; the second column was charging towards the breach. Among its number was a young captain, Saint-Arnaud, who, in a letter to his brother,<sup>1</sup> vividly describes the events of the next two hours: 'We reached the top of the breach. At that moment there was a terrible explosion. . . . For an instant after the noise had subsided, a deathly silence followed. Those who had remained on their feet, hurled back by the force of the explosion, clutched for support at their swords, their neighbours or the wall on our left. Those nearest to the top of the breach were wiping earth, dust and powder from their eyes. For a moment they were almost suffocated. Then we saw a terrible sight. Those wretches who had not lost their limbs, and who could find their way out through the wreckage, came running towards the battery. Climbing down through the breach, they cried: "Get back! we are lost! there are mines everywhere. Get back while you can!"'

'When I think of those scorched faces, those hairless heads which bled so horribly, those tattered clothes; when I recall those pitious cries; it seems astonishing to me that the fugitives did not carry the whole of the second column back with them.'

La Moricière lay wounded, temporarily blinded, and Combe assumed command of the columns. With a shout of 'Forward!' which was taken up by several of the officers, he rushed sword in hand to the attack. Inside the town chaos reigned. Every one followed his instinct. Saint-Arnaud found his objective in a gun whose fire had been particularly deadly. 'From a small recess which served as embrasure for a cannon, seven Turks were firing at us continuously. My head down, I threw myself into this hole, followed closely by my men. The Turks defended themselves with desperate courage. They fired, and we killed them as they were reloading. They are fine soldiers. Our bayonets spared none; we were not making prisoners . . .

'Leaving the battery, I turned towards the spot where the fusillade seemed heaviest. I reached the house of Ben Aissa, the Bey's lieutenant. Major Bedeau and Major Despinois were there. They were still trying to find how to break through into the town. Balls were flying from all sides, striking the paving-stones round us like hail on roofs. I asked for orders; I begged to be let out of this cage where I had to keep on dodging the bullets like a bear trying to avoid a swarm of hornets. At last the sappers

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Arnaud, Maréchal de: *Lettres* (1855).

arrived with the news that there was a barricade to be carried at the end of a small street which led into one of the main thoroughfares. I looked at Bedeau, and on a small gesture of assent that only I understood, I moved off with my men, shouting: “*A moi, la Légion!*”

“Oh! that narrow, winding little street; I shall often see it in my dreams . . . It was congested with troops. Every one was shouting; no one could make himself heard. My rank gave me authority, and amid the hail of bullets I re-established some sort of order. Moving forward towards the end of the street, I saw that we were held up by formidable fire from a neatly constructed barricade. Doors, beams, mattresses . . . nothing was lacking. The Kabyles were defending it with hot fire, and were killing a great many of our soldiers. Returning to my men, I explained to them that by charging the barricade and taking it at the point of the bayonet, our losses would be much lighter than by continuing this ineffective fire against the mattresses. When they had grasped this, I placed sharpshooters in some of the neighbouring houses which we had already taken, and their shots troubled the defenders a good deal. Then, sabre in hand, shouting “*hourra!*” (which the foreigners understand best), crying out “*En avant la Légion!*” I threw myself on top of the barricade and fell on the other side among a crowd of Arabs. The fall saved my life, because all the shots passed over my head. They fired at me at such close range that my cap was scorched by the powder and my sabre’s scabbard pierced by a ball. As I lay there, I had the satisfaction of hearing a soldier call out wildly: “Help the captain! He’s on the ground there wounded.” My fall had deceived them. Up again in a flash, I began hitting out at the Turks in fine style, and the barricade was soon in our hands. We now had entrance into the same street where the first column had originally been driven back.”

This street was the principal shopping centre of Constantine, narrow and tortuous, lined with booths. In every window, behind every doorway, on every roof, the Turks kept up a deadly fire. “The street had to be taken house by house, and under a fire all the more terrible since it was impossible to see from which point it came. It was in this street, where we waded up to our knees in corpses and blood, that our losses were heaviest. On reaching it, my first concern was to keep my men close to the walls. But in spite of that, many of them fell, mortally wounded by fire at such close range. Twenty yards up the street we were stopped

dead by a continuous cross fire which killed all those who tried to advance. The soldiers were no longer obeying orders promptly. . . . The obstruction came from a large building on the right, several storeys high which, because of the ceaseless volleys that came from rifles and swivel-guns on its ramparts, appeared to be on fire. I learned later that it was the barracks of the Bey's troops. There was only one thing to be done—to take it by storm. In an instant five or six officers of various corps had collected their men together. The door was broken down; they rushed into the courtyards, up the stairs, on to the terraces, into the rooms . . . What a scene it was! What slaughter! Blood stood in pools on the stairs. Not a cry escaped from the lips of the dying. Death blows were given and taken with that frenzy of desperation which makes one clench one's teeth, which stifles one's cries. The Turks made little attempt to get away; and those who did, made use of every inch of cover to fire on us . . .

Further down the street, fully exposed to the enemy's rifles, Combe was urging his men forward. As Saint-Arnaud joined him, the Colonel received a hit. 'A spasm of pain shook him, but he uttered no cry. As he turned, another ball struck him. Unaided he walked back towards the breach, where he gave a clear account of the situation to Valée.

'The duc de Nemours, who was standing near, turned to him:

"But you are wounded, Colonel?"

"No, Monseigneur, I am dead."

At nine o'clock the city surrendered unconditionally. Immediately, the proud, heroic citizens became abject. 'The Arabs, and in particular the Jews, came towards us, seizing our hands, our clothes, kissing them, bowing to the ground, trying to read the expressions on our faces. A movement of the eyebrows, an angry look, and they fled or threw themselves at our feet. It revolted me.'

Then the plundering began. It lasted for three days. The ranks led the way, the officers followed; and, 'as always, the leaders of the army and the staff officers came away with the largest booty', observed Saint-Arnaud cynically. Berbrugger was searching for manuscripts for the Algiers library. Temple, who was trying, with little success, to get some too (as well as an Arab horse), was fascinated by the 'tact and rapidity' with which the native soldiers ransacked the houses. The French in comparison were mere amateurs. The Jews, who had an old score to pay off

against their Turkish tyrants, managed to make away with many of the most valuable objects. ‘The best soldiers,’ Saint-Arnaud noticed, ‘only took food; the worst were loaded with carpets, *burnouses*, bedspreads, *haiks*, and heaven knows what else besides. Everything was looted, nothing respected. Some of the soldiers found boxes full of silver; and some made away with thousands of francs of Turkish money.’

On the northern side of the city, at the point furthest from the French attack, the rock face drops almost vertically. It was at this spot, under the Beys, that adulteresses had always been thrown to their death. ‘Here a hideous spectacle now presented itself to our eyes. Some two hundred women and children lay broken upon the rocks. The Arabs, seeing us take a foothold in the town, and beginning to realize that they had lost, had come there to try to save their women and children. They had attempted an impossible flight down these unscalable cliffs. Terror increased their haste, and made the undertaking still more perilous. Many women and children had lost their lives in this horrible way. A few were still breathing when we got there. One or two, as if by a miracle, had even reached flat ledges of rock in safety—ledges which led nowhere. By means of chains of soldiers, and by the use of ropes, we rescued them; but their fear of us was the greatest obstacle to our helping them.’

The main army remained a week in the town, which the Jews were now busily cleaning up. The duc de Nemours and Valée established their head-quarters in the Bey’s palace, a modern, and externally an unpretentious building, but full of graceful courts planted with orange, citron and pomegranate trees. Marble fountains, gaily painted tiles, terraces, rich stuffs and glittering candelabra, a lion-pit with twelve lions—all the gaudy trappings of eastern pomp were to be found there. Brightly coloured mural paintings decorated the walls—panoramas of Constantine and the great cities of Islam, of naval actions and the like. Ahmed had removed his treasure; but his harem, destined by oriental custom to become the property of the victor, remained. The lovely Aïsha, Ahmed’s favourite, soon recovered from her initial panic and gave a ball in honour of the French officers, at which she and some of her eighty companions condescended to dance. ‘These females,’ says Wagner, ‘were, of course, treated with great respect, and nobody was allowed to intrude on their abode. Once only, an indiscreet officer entered their rooms; but the females rushed with

dishevelled hair to the Prince, complaining of the outrage, and the latter immediately gave orders to have the intruder ejected.'

But behind the laughter and gaiety, the almost forgotten pleasures of food, warmth and shelter, lay the remembrance of the dead and the wounded—of Damrémont, Perrégaux, Combe and a quarter of the total number of officers who would march no more with the army, of more than a thousand men who lay together in a common grave.

On October 20, the advance columns of the main force began their homeward march, leaving 2,500 men under General Bernelle to garrison the city. Ben Aissa had managed to make his escape. Ahmed, discouraged and discredited, was skulking somewhere in the mountains; and in the palace where he had painted the great panorama of Constantine, strutted French officers, few of whom, happily, could read the grandiloquent inscription which he had ordered to be placed above it:

'This fortunate abode glitters and is resplendent with beauty to the eyes of the beholders. The Prince who resides in it is Hadj Ahmed Basha. May Allah make him victorious over the race of infidels! Allah has dispersed like dust his antagonists and all those who envy him! May He increase his glory and power! May He grant him palaces in the garden of eternal felicities, and people them with millions of houris to crown his happiness! So may it please Allah! Amen! Amen!'



THE STORMING OF CONSTANTINE, 1837

From a painting by Horace Vernet in the Versailles Museum  
(Photo M. N. Vernaillie)



## CHAPTER XII

### LÉON ROCHEs

'BEFORE you finally determine to become an Arab try a gentle experiment; take one of those small, shabby houses in May Fair, and shut yourself up in it with forty or fifty shrill cousins for a couple of months in July'; thus the author of *Eothen*, who a few years later was himself to join in the hunt for Abd el Kader, admonished his gentle readers.

A hundred years ago the experiment of 'going native' was more rarely made than it is to-day. In the autumn of 1837, while the French army was marching for the second time against Constantine, a young Frenchman named Léon Roches was on his way to Abd el Kader's camp to offer his services to the Emir. He became in due course his private secretary and adviser, and for two years shared with him the hardships of camp life and the dangers of battle. Of the handful of Europeans who came in contact with Abd el Kader before his surrender to the French, Roches alone could have claimed him as a friend. His life story, vividly related in his autobiography,<sup>1</sup> reads like a tale from *The Arabian Nights*; actually it is an unvarnished account of a career full of strange coincidences and improbable twists of fortune.

Roches' mother died when he was still young. His childhood at Grenoble under the care of an aunt, and an uncongenial period of training for the Bar followed by a short commercial career in Italy, were conventional enough. In 1832, at the age of twenty-three, he set out unwillingly for Algiers to join his father who had just purchased a farm there. Roches was bored and depressed in Africa. He had hated leaving Europe; he disliked Algiers; and he saw that the farm was likely to prove a failure. His father suggested social distractions, and sent him on a round of visits

<sup>1</sup> *Trente-deux ans à travers l'Islam*, 2 vols., 1884, 1887. Although compiled many years after the events it describes, the work incorporates a diary and a number of letters written at the time. No one who has studied these volumes can doubt for a moment the sincerity of the author's account, much of which is corroborated by other writers.

which only made him gloomier, till one day, at the country house of the widow of a minister of a former Dey of Algiers, he made the acquaintance of a girl of fourteen called Khadidja.

Khadidja was of Caucasian type, with blue eyes and black, arched eyebrows; she looked shyly at Roches, the first Christian she had met. Within a year, though he was only able to see her once or twice and had never spoken to her, he had fallen in love. Then a severe attack of fever struck him down; when he recovered he found she had vanished. He searched in vain for word of her, till a chance remark at a dinner-party brought him the news he feared—Khadidja had married. His informant added casually that the girl had been forced to marry against her will, and that she was said to be in love with a young Frenchman.

Roches now started to learn Arabic, and opened a furtive correspondence with Khadidja through the intermediary of her old nurse, a Negress called Messaouda, who appreciated the value of French silver. The latter even managed to contrive a five-minute interview where, from the terrace of the house opposite, Roches was able to take Khadidja's hand in his. (There are some compensations for the narrowness of oriental streets.) 'May God reward you for learning our language,' said the girl. But for the rest, the illicit flirtation had to be carried on at longe range. The young man would climb to a neighbouring hill, the bride to the terrace above her house, and across the unsuspecting town the lovers indulged in mutual admiration through two pairs of binoculars thoughtfully provided by Roches.<sup>1</sup> Soft glances thus distantly exchanged soon proved a poor substitute for held hands and whispered confessions of love. The inevitable happened—more meetings, a suspicious husband, and the removal of the bride to Miliana, at that moment the headquarters of Abd el Kader.

By this time Roches, who had had employment as interpreter with the French army, spoke Arabic fluently, and was familiar enough with the ways of Islam to pass himself off as a Mohammedan. In his misery he conceived a wild plan—he would join the Emir, gain his confidence, help him in the reconstruction of his empire, and finally use his influence to obtain a divorce for Khadidja. The timely signing of the treaty of Tafna removed the greatest obstacle to the execution of his project. It was many weeks before

<sup>1</sup> Almost at the same time, more than 3,000 miles away, the young Garibaldi was catching, through a telescope, the first glimpse of his future wife, Anita Riberas.

he reached Abd el Kader's camp, for he stopped on the way in the tents of smaller chiefs, proclaiming himself a convert to Islam and perfecting himself in his new role. On more than one occasion his self-control was sorely tested, for the Arabs were constantly bragging of the Frenchmen they had killed, and took a special delight in reminding Roches that if the Holy War broke out again he would have to fight against the Christians. One evening he could bear it no longer, and challenged twenty Arabs to fight him; but fortunately for him his host was able to arrange the matter without bloodshed.

The first part of Roches' ambitious programme was carried out without a serious hitch, and in the middle of December he arrived at Ain-Chellela where Abd el Kader was encamped. In company with Sidi Embarck the *Khalifa* of Miliana, the Frenchman was conducted into the Emir's tent.

'As I had been given to expect, he was alone at the further end of it. I approached slowly, keeping my eyes lowered, knelt before him, and took his hand to kiss as was the custom. It was the first time that I had made an act of submission to a Mussulman, and it was repugnant to me. Then I looked up at him. I thought I was dreaming when I saw turned upon me his magnificent blue eyes with their long, black lashes—liquid, sparkling eyes full of vivacity and sympathy. He saw the impression he had made on me, and seemed pleased. He beckoned to me to sit on the ground in front of him.

'I observed him closely. His complexion is pale, and his skin smooth; his forehead broad and high; his eyebrows black, arched, and delicately formed. His nose is well shaped and slightly aquiline; his lips thin without being tight. His black, silky beard lightly frames the oval of a face which is full of expression. A small *ouchem* (tattoo-mark) between his eyebrows emphasizes the purity of his forehead. His hands are small and slender, very white, and lined with blue veins. His long, tapering fingers have pink nails which are beautifully kept; and his feet, upon which he almost always rests one of his hands, are equally white and remarkable. His height is very little over five feet, but his muscles show that he is enormously strong. A few turns of a camel-hair cord passed round his head hold his fine, white *haïk* in place. A cotton shirt with a woollen one of the same colour over it, the *haïk*, a white *burnous* covered with a brown one, form his whole dress. He always has a small, black rosary in his right hand. He tells

the beads quickly, and while he is listening to a conversation he continues to mutter the customary prayers. If an artist wanted to paint one of those inspired medieval monks whose zeal drove them to fight under the banner of the cross, I do not believe he could find a better model than Abd el Kader.'

'You are welcome,' he said, 'for every good Moslem must rejoice when he sees the number of true believers grow. Our holy Prophet has said: "It will be more profitable to you at the great Judgment Day to boast of one Christian won for Islam than of one thousand slain in battle." God has sent you to us, and we must keep you, teach you, and love you more than our other brothers.' His voice, Roches noted with surprise, was jerky and rather sepulchral, not at all in keeping with his appearance; nor was his way of speaking, which was quick and staccato.

After a short conversation Roches produced the presents he had brought—a rifle of unusual design and a valuable *kamous* (dictionary). 'We should make gifts to you, and not you to us,' said the Emir when he had admired them; 'but I appreciate your kindness, and I accept them. I never receive presents except from those whom I mean to like.' Roches approached him to kiss his hand; but the Emir withdrew it and kissed him upon the shoulder, an honour he reserved for persons of distinction.

Of Sidi Embarek, *Khalifa* of Miliana and one of the Emir's most loyal supporters, Roches formed a far less favourable opinion: 'He is of medium height and very fat. His gait is more like that of a half-t tipsy hussar than that of a *marabout*. He is one-eyed, a defect that adds to the deceitfulness of his appearance. His complexion is pale and rather ruddy, his features fairly regular. His full lips suggest sensuality. At the most he is twenty-six years old. His excessive cheerfulness seems forced. He enjoys a great reputation for bravery.' The trouble, so people said, was that he drank, though he took good care to prevent Abd el Kader from getting to know about it. Roches had friends among the Turks in Miliana, and he was aware that Sidi Embarek knew of this and strongly disapproved. The *khalifa* condescended to accept a few gifts from the Frenchman and thanked him graciously; but Roches knew that he had made a dangerous enemy.

The special favour which the Emir showed to Roches soon won for him the respect of the soldiers; but it only served to increase the jealousy and mistrust of Sidi Embarek and his friends. The Frenchman often rode by the Emir's side and listened eagerly to

his plans for consolidating his empire. Abd el Kader's first care was the continuation of his religious education, and this task was entrusted to the kadi who had originally instructed the Emir himself. 'It is not enough to say "I am a Moslem" Abd el Kader told him; 'you must understand what it means to be one. Do not follow the example of most of the Arabs that you see in my camp. God has chosen me to regenerate them, to rekindle the flame in their stony hearts. Governed for centuries by ignorant soldiers who were Moslems in name only, accustomed to cringing before those tyrants who set them an example of cruelty and injustice, they have given up the practices of our sublime religion. But God in His mercy has driven out the tyrants against whom our laws forbade us to rise, and has given us in their place these Christians whom our glorious ancestors attacked even in their own country. God in His mercy, Omar,<sup>1</sup> has brought them here. We have been forced to make war to defend our hearths, our women, our children, and—beyond everything else—our religion. It is a Holy War.

'Moslem blood will wash away our sins. We shall become less unworthy of our illustrious ancestors. If we had had their zeal, do you suppose that when the French landed on the soil of Islam one would have escaped? But God's decrees are unalterable; we must expiate our crimes. If God will listen to my humble voice, if He will show His mercy and goodness to His unhappy children, I will dedicate my life to reawakening the slumbering faith of Islam. Woe to the Christians! The more I know the French the less I fear them. I had believed them to be like those who fought Solyman to recover the town where they imagine Sidna-Aïssa (Christ) to be buried. In spite of the hatred that every Moslem must keep alive against the infidels, I have often admired the bravery of those men, their generosity, the way in which they kept their word, and their strict observance of their religious customs. The conquerors of Algiers are very different. I have been told that some of them do not believe in a God. They have built no churches, and do not respect their ministers of religion. They never pray; they break their word; and they betray their own allies. God will abandon them because they have abandoned Him.'

Roches wisely refrained from defending his countrymen; but he ventured to enquire how it was that the Emir had made peace

<sup>1</sup> The name by which Roches had chosen to be known in Islam.

with the Christians when his religion compelled him to wage war upon them.

'In doing so,' replied Abd el Kader, 'I was inspired by the word of God, as it is written in the Koran: "Moslems must consider peace with the infidels as a truce during which to prepare themselves for war." I agreed to terms which I will keep so long as the French do so too. How long peace lasts will depend upon them; the rupture will not come from us. When the hour of God strikes, they themselves will provide the excuse for renewing the Holy War. I hope, too, that the French will bear in mind the sacrifice of men and money which they have already made without extending their domination beyond the walls of their fortresses. Let them also remember that I have been welcomed throughout the length and breadth of Algeria by tribes to whom I have brought order and peace where disorder and anarchy reigned before. I hope the French will give up the idea of trying to force their rule upon a people who will always be their mortal enemies. The Turks insulted them, and by God's grace they have driven them out. Let them be satisfied with Algiers. Providence, Omar, has brought you to me; if you have the welfare of Islam at heart you will be able to give me valuable help in making our cause triumph.'

Roches was dumbfounded. He thought Abd el Kader had become the ally of France; he found him still her bitterest enemy! From the Arab point of view the Emir's ambition was noble enough; he wanted to regenerate his people, to revive their luke-warm faith, to drive out the invader from their land. But would it be possible now for Roches to serve Abd el Kader without betraying his country? On the other hand, might there not be opportunities for the Frenchman to use his influence to make the Emir appreciate the advantages of peace? His prejudice against the French, so it seemed to Roches, was largely based upon an ignorance of matters outside his own country.

Abd el Kader had not wasted the summer and autumn months. At peace with France, he had been in a position to make his power felt through the length and breadth of the large territory over which he now ruled, and disloyal tribes had come to know the swift and pitiless hand of his revenge. Roches had not been many days in the camp when the army set out upon one of these punitive expeditions. The victims this time were to be the Zouatna, a tribe of Koulouglis who for nearly three centuries had been living among the foothills of the Djurdjura mountains. Like the majority

of their race they had co-operated with the French and had accepted a *kaïd*, Biroum, chosen by Clauzel. The Zouatna were proud and brave, and their defeat would make a considerable impression upon the whole of the surrounding district; but because of their Turkish origin Abd el Kader knew that he could assault them without the risk of bringing the whole of the vast hornets' nest of Kabylia about his ears.

The Zouatna, brave though they were, understood that they were no match for the Emir's far more powerful army. They hurriedly despatched envoys bearing gifts as a token of submission. But mere submission could no longer satisfy the Emir, who needed blood to atone for past treachery. He imposed a tax which the Zouatna were unable to pay, and seized upon their inability to do so, as an excuse to attack them. Once more the allies of the French were to be made to realize how ill their friendship with the Christians had served them.

During the march eastwards, Roches had plenty of opportunity to observe the lack of discipline that prevailed among Abd el Kader's troops. Alone his regulars preserved any semblance of formation on the march, the rest of the army was spread out over a vast area. This gave a totally false impression of its size, and more than one French general had been deceived by its apparent greatness. The irregulars were completely out of hand, and even a judicious use of the bastinado did little to discourage pillaging. The din was unbelievable—a medley of shrill, piercing oboes, of big drums and little drums, of the plaintive cries of camels, of the neighing of horses and the braying of donkeys, of the shrieks of those who were receiving punishment. From the summit of a hill Roches was able to get a panoramic view of the huge concourse of men and animals in the valleys below.

Immediately before the attack Abd el Kader addressed his troops. The Zouatna, he said, had allied themselves with the Christians at a time when the Arabs were shedding their blood in the Holy War. They refused to pay the taxes prescribed by the Koran; they refused to recognize his authority as coming from God. The time for leniency is past,' he cried; 'the day of punishment has come. You will hurl yourselves against these rebels with the courage which makes you dreaded by all. Do not fear their skill with the rifle, for their bullets are not aimed by the hand of God. They trust to the protection of their mountains, as the eagle believes itself safe in its eyrie; but the brave hunter knows how

to climb the rock where the eagle has built its nest.' With shouts and war-cries the army surged forward to the attack.

Roches' sympathies were with the Zouatna who had served the French faithfully and by whom they had been left in the lurch. But he knew that he was on trial, that every eye would be watching him; if he failed in courage or determination he was lost.

The battle lasted all day. The Zouatna contested every inch of their inevitable retreat, taking full advantage of the irregularities of the ground, creeping from rock to rock, and leading the Arabs on into still more difficult country. The last stand was made before the entrance to a cave in which the Zouatna had placed their women and children. To break this desperate resistance the Emir made use of his battalion of Tlemcen Koulouglis who, knowing that their families were in his power, were thus forced to fight against their own countrymen. For a time five men kept more than six hundred of the enemy at bay. Roches, with the cavalry, was a spectator of their heroic struggle against impossible odds:

'Two of the five had been killed; the other three fought on for a little. At last their fire ceased, and we saw them hurling against their assailants the boulders behind which they had been taking cover. When this last resource was used up, they seized their long rifles and those of their dead companions, broke them against the rocks, and hurled the pieces at the enemy; then, drawing their *yataghans*, they felled to the ground more than one of the attackers, while shielding the entrance to the grotto with their bodies. They were like lions; but in the end they were over-powered. The Agha ordered them to be bound and carried alive to the camp.' Then the pathetic, bedraggled band of women and children issued from the cave. They were immediately driven inside again, and a guard posted at the entrance.

That evening Abd el Kader sat in council to decide the fate of the prisoners. After the sunset prayer Roches went to the Emir's tent. 'The Emir, accompanied by his chiefs, came in and sat down in his usual place. Eighteen prisoners were brought in. All had been stripped, and their nakedness was only hidden by a few rags stained with the blood which still flowed from their wounds. They gave no sign whatever of pain or fear; courage and resolution were written on their warrior faces. In the gloomy silence could be heard the chattering teeth of a shivering old man who was among the prisoners. The Emir, his eyes downcast, was rapidly telling his beads. The suspense was terrible.

'At last Abd el Kader spoke:

"You have revolted against God's law," he said in a leaden voice; "you were taken prisoner with arms in your hands; God's law condemns you to die."

"Do not thus profane the name of God," cried one of the prisoners in a loud voice. I recognized him for one of the heroes of the grotto. "You did not consult God's law when you despoiled and imprisoned our brothers in the west; you did not consult God's law when, having only yesterday given the *aman* (protection) to a handful of Moslems, you to-day hurl thousands of your soldiers against them. Now, that our heads may fall, you appeal to God's law. Order your executioners to strike. Death is a hundred times preferable to the shame of having submitted to you. We shall be waiting for you on the great day when God shall judge the victim and the executioner."

The *chaouchs* and others who stood by had tried to silence the brave man, but his voice grew still louder. Bound though he was, he seemed to dominate the assembly. His military bearing and the terrible power of his eyes inspired a fearful respect. He was Biroum, chief of the Zouatna, the friend of the French.

The Emir was no longer recognizable. His features, usually so gentle, had become drawn; his lips were livid; he raised his eyes, and their expression was awful to behold. The *chaouchs* understood that look and led Biroum two or three paces forward. He was reciting the act of faith of Islam, and his head fell as his lips were forming the last prayer. The Emir must have made another sign, for a second head fell. The sinister appearance of the executioners as they went about their hideous work, and the wild eyes of those present, stimulated by the sight of blood, added still further to the horror of the scene. A third victim had just been struck down. Now it was the turn of the venerable old man with the long, white beard. He was so frozen, the poor old fellow, that he couldn't move, and they had to support him. Just as the executioners were about to strike, a number of little children suddenly burst into the tent. Some of them rushed between the old man and the executioners; the rest threw themselves at the Emir's feet. One in particular, a little girl as pretty as an angel, seized his hands and covered them with kisses and tears. "In the name of your mother, of your father's memory, of your children, in the name of God, forgive my father," she cried in a voice so sweet that it touched my heart. So inspired was the

poor child that she had lost all sense of fear. She was almost upon the Emir's breast, and clung with her little arms round his neck. This moving scene completely changed the attitude of the spectators. Eyes which a moment before had been red with a lust for blood were now wet with tears. The Emir's expression at once became gentle and restrained; he kissed the child upon the forehead, and made a sign for the other prisoners to be taken away. All evidence of the executions disappeared. Then the crowd dispersed, and every one returned sad and silent to his tent.'

Roches was completely shattered by the events he had witnessed, and the following morning he made a point of being absent from the Emir's levée. On his journey to Abd el Kader the young Frenchman had been joined by an Arab named Sidi Yusuf whom he knew to have a secret sympathy with the Koulouglis; this man he now sought out. With him Roches felt certain that he could talk freely. When they were safely out of earshot of the camp, he told Sidi Yusuf how shocked he had been by the Emir's cruelty and injustice. 'Never let any one know that you disapprove, or your life will be in danger,' replied the Arab. 'My ancestors were partisans of the Osmanlis, and I myself regret to see an Arab government take their place. This will convince you that I am speaking impartially when I say that there are reasons which can explain, can even justify the Emir's conduct. You have not been here long enough to judge. Abd el Kader has styled himself the regenerator of Islam, and the Koran states clearly: "Every Moslem convicted of dealings with the infidels is to be considered as himself an infidel, and deserves death." The case of the Zouatna was aggravated by the fact that they were in armed rebellion against their sovereign. The Emir, moreover, does not take responsibility for condemning them to death, but leaves that to his council; he is only their executor in the matter.' Roches felt himself calmed if not convinced by what Sidi Yusuf told him; and in the evening he went to the Emir's tent where he received congratulations on his conduct during the battle.

Roches also learned from Sidi Yusuf that it was an old Negro named Ben Fakha who had staged the dramatic entry of the children. This man, who had charge of Abd el Kader's tent, had served his master faithfully for many years. He had given him his first riding lessons, accompanied him on all his expeditions, and was the only person whom Abd el Kader could implicitly trust. The Emir was devoted to him, and always consulted him in moments of

crisis. De France, during his imprisonment among the Arabs, came to know Ben Fakha well and appreciated his qualities, though the Christian never grew to understand the Negro's rather warped sense of humour which found expression in painful and humiliating practical jokes. But for all his rough exterior Ben Fakha had a heart of gold, and on more than one occasion he had been known to intervene when the Emir's strict sense of justice was untempered with mercy. Roches found in him a friend.

A day or two later, order was given to strike camp. Just as the army was about to march, Roches was summoned by the *Khalifa* of Miliana and informed that the Emir was sending him on a mission to Mascara. In vain the Frenchman begged to be allowed to receive his instructions from Abd el Kader in person; he was hustled off under the charge of three horsemen, even before he could get into touch with his Arab servant Ahmad who had charge of his arms and his few belongings. A week later he reached Mascara and was conducted into the presence of the *khalifa*.

Mustapha ben Thami, *Khalifa* of Mascara, had married Abd el Kader's sister and had at one time been the tutor of the Emir, who on this account showed him some respect in public. He was just and intelligent, but a coward; and in private Abd el Kader had been known to refer to him familiarly as 'Fathma'. He was afraid of the Emir, and had not even the courage to indulge in the luxurious living for which he had a taste. His expression was cold and hard, but he would have been good-looking enough if he had not been badly pitted by small-pox. He received Roches kindly, but failed to enlighten him upon the subject of his mission.

Five days passed. During that time Roches was able, without arousing suspicion, to get a letter to Daumas, the French representative in Mascara, in which he explained his position with regard to the Emir and his determination to rejoin the French in the event of war. This letter, which he requested Daumas to keep, was to stand him in good stead at a later date.

Then, suddenly, Roches received orders to proceed to Tlemcen to continue his religious education there. He was by now so used to hiding his feelings that he gave no outward sign of his astonishment and dismay at the news. But he had no longer any doubt as to why Abd el Kader had got rid of him: Sidi Embarek had denounced him as a spy, and Tlemcen was to be his place of exile.

Shattered were all his dreams of serving the Emir, and through his help, of winning the hand of Khadidja.

On the road to Tlemcen, Roches' small party met the impressive caravan of Sidi Mohammed Saïd, the Emir's eldest brother, who was on his way back from Fez where he had been presenting to the Sultan of Morocco gifts which the Emir had received from France. Mohammed Saïd, eldest son of Mahi ed Din, had succeeded him as *marabout* of the family *guetna*. He was about forty years of age, blue-eyed like his brother, a man of simple piety and great charm. Roches took to him at once, and could see that the *marabout* reciprocated his affection. They parted with mutual regret.

The *Khalifa* of Tlemcen, Bou Hamidi, was four years older than the Emir; but at one time they had been students together, and to their early friendship the older man owed his promotion to the *khalifate*. Ever since Abd el Kader's rise to power, Bou Hamidi had been the centre of resistance to French aggression in the west. Though his manner was rough and unprepossessing, he had many sterling qualities; he was just, he was fearless, he was a loyal friend, he was immensely active and a fine soldier. Three things in life he loved—his books, his horses and his weapons. Bou Hamidi received Roches rather coldly; but he protested the goodness of his intentions, promised to find him a teacher, and ordered him to be taken to an inn. Here, for the first time in his life, the Frenchman made the acquaintance of lice, an experience which he found so humiliating that he burst into tears.

One evening shortly after his arrival Roches was just on the point of dropping off to sleep when there came a gentle knock on the door. He opened it cautiously, and saw before him a tall, lean, rather melancholy-looking old man with a white beard. His face was kindly, and there was something in his appearance which suggested that life had not always been easy for him. He introduced himself as Hadj Bechir ben Hussein, a scholar and a Koulougli, secretary to the *khalifa*. Ahmad, Roches' Arab servant, though he had not been allowed to follow his master, had managed to get into touch with some of his Koulougli friends. Bechir had received a letter from one of these and, on the pretext of cross-examining Roches, had obtained the *khalifa*'s permission to visit him. Bechir confirmed the Frenchman's fears: though he was to be well-treated, he was, to all intents and purposes, under arrest.

During the trying days that followed, Bechir proved himself a real friend. He came regularly to the inn, ostensibly to instruct Roches in the Koran; and his visits helped to dispel the brooding despondency which had begun to take hold of the disillusioned young Frenchman. There were also less welcome guests in the shape of a handful of renegades who were driven by idle curiosity to take a look at the Frenchman who had already gained a certain notoriety by his sensational conversion. Then, as suddenly as they had begun, Bechir's visits ceased. A blank despair seized upon Roches, and a bout of fever completed his dejection. He was soon too weak to stand, and there was no longer any one to look after him. He became delirious. How long he lay there he never knew; suddenly he was roused from his lethargy by a voice in his ear: 'Monsieur Léon! Monsieur Léon! *C'est moi, Isidore!*' He found at his side a young soldier who at one time had helped with the farm at Algiers, and who had taken a great liking to him. Isidore had heard at Oran that his old friend was at Tlemcen; and although he could not speak a word of Arabic, he had started off immediately in search of him. Bechir, too, had reappeared. His absence was easily explained; he had been dragged off by the Khalifa to help collect taxes in the neighbourhood. He wept when he saw the plight to which Roches was reduced, pressed a well-filled purse into Isidore's hand, and ordered food and medicines to be brought from his house. A few days of massage and attention worked wonders with the invalid; half of his sickness had been mental, and the company of his friends brought him fresh hope.

When Roches was well enough he went with Bechir, supported on the arm of the faithful Isidore, to visit a shrine about a mile from Tlemcen. The pilgrimage, Bechir promised him, would complete his cure. There on his knees in the little mosque Roches prayed as he had never prayed before—to the God of his fathers; Islam, he realized with astonishment, had made a Christian of him! They passed out again into the spring sunlight. Tlemcen lay spread before them, in the beauty of its flowering orchards and gentle streams, the outline of its mosques and minarets set against mountains still crowned with snow. A distant line of sea, and a handful of violets at his feet, reminded Roches painfully of the France he had left. 'One has to be exiled and wretched,' he wrote, 'to appreciate the emotions that are aroused by the sight of the smallest objects which remind one of home and distant friends.'

The *khalifa* was not long in discovering that his secretary was

unreasonably concerned over the fate of Roches. He ordered the old man to keep away from the inn, and replaced him by a sly-looking *taleb* who hardly troubled to conceal the fact that he had been sent to spy upon his charge. Once more Roches was in despair. His plans were shattered; any hope of finding and rescuing Khadidja (who, he tells us, was ever in his mind though he mentions her name but rarely) had almost disappeared.

One last chance remained—flight. Roches and Isidore had recently been given permission to ride in the immediate neighbourhood of the town. The guards who accompanied them had at first kept careful watch on their movements; but before long their vigilance relaxed. It was not very difficult for the two men to give them the slip. They made off rapidly by a side-track in the direction of Oran. By nightfall they had reached a wood, and they decided to hide in it until dawn; but the sight of a lion drove them out into the open again. Near the edge of the wood they came upon a small group of camp-fires. The nights were still cold, and the temptation great; throwing caution aside, they approached and demanded hospitality in the name of God.

They awoke next morning to find about a hundred of Bou Hamidi's cavalry surrounding the tent. They were immediately escorted back to Tlemcen and dragged into the presence of the *khalifa* who accused them of espionage and attempted flight and sentenced them to death. Roches saw that his only hope now was to answer back fearlessly; in an impassioned speech he told Bou Hamidi that he had sacrificed his life, his religion, his family and his fortune to serve the Emir—and he had been treated like a Jew. 'Yes,' he concluded, 'I was returning to the Christians, for it is written in the Koran, "Fly from those who ill use and despise you, and go to those who welcome and esteem you." I do not fear your threats. You have no right to put me to death without a written order from the Emir. Show me that, and I will stretch out my neck for the sabre of your executioner. If you have no such order, then fear the vengeance of Abd el Kader who will exact a terrible retribution for the life of the Moslem whom he entrusted to you.' Bluff won the day: the sentence was remitted on condition that the Frenchmen returned at once to Abd el Kader. They asked for nothing better. On March 17, after an affectionate leave-taking from Bechir who pressed more gold into Roches' hand, the two prisoners set off for Médéa where they arrived a fortnight later.

Roches found the Emir giving audience. As soon as this was over, he attempted to force an entrance into the room; but the *chaouchs* held him back, saying that Abd el Kader wished to be alone. ‘Tell the Emir,’ said Roches imperiously, ‘that Omar, son of Roches, has arrived from Tlemcen and asks to see him.’ One of the *chaouchs* went into the audience chamber and returned a moment later with a few Spanish piastres which he put into Roches’ hand. ‘There’s something to get a bath and a cup of coffee with,’ he said condescendingly; ‘the Emir wants to rest; he will see you to-morrow.’

‘I have not come to beg for alms,’ shouted Roches indignantly, and throwing the money in the *chaouch’s* face he pushed his way into the room.

Roches advanced towards the Emir, and remained standing. ‘Be seated, Omar,’ said Abd el Kader coldly. ‘Calm yourself, and tell me why you have left Tlemcen without my orders, and have forced your way into my room. That is not the conduct of a courteous man or of a respectful subject.’

‘It is the conduct of a *true believer* who has been ill-treated by those who are Moslems in name only,’ replied Roches firmly, still remaining standing. The Emir was about to interrupt him, but Roches continued: ‘Allow me to speak; hear what I have to say: and forgive the roughness of my speech, for my heart is full.’

‘Speak then,’ said Abd el Kader.

‘For you, son of Mahi ed Din, I left my family and the comfort of my home. I was dazzled by the reports of your bravery, your goodness and your noble schemes; I came to offer my services to you without reservation—and you sent me into exile as a spy! You listened to the calumnies of despicable men who were no doubt afraid that I would expose their vileness. Is that the welcome for a Christian who freely embraced Islam in order to help you regenerate your people?’

‘Let me finish,’ he cried as Abd el Kader again tried to interrupt. ‘I swear that no motive of self interest’ (had he forgotten Khadidja?) ‘brought me to you. I am ready to serve you faithfully; but if you doubt my loyalty, then I would prefer to try to escape, even at the risk of my life.’

The Emir saw his sincerity. ‘You are a man, Omar; and I admire manliness above everything. Forgive me for having misjudged you. I will make amends for the wrong I have done you. You shall be a son, a brother rather, to me. I do not

offer you riches or pleasure; but my food shall be your food, my clothes your clothes, my horses and arms your horses and arms. He who aspires to eternal life should only concern himself in this life with that which the Prophet commands. Go now and rest; may God go with you and strengthen your faith.' Once more Roches felt the magic of those blue eyes. He seized Abd el Kader's hand, kissed it and held it between his own. The past was forgiven.

While the court remained at Médéa Roches spent many hours in discussion with the Emir. Abd el Kader cross-examined him minutely about France, and Roches in his replies never missed an opportunity of emphasizing the advantages to the Arabs of a continued peace. More than once his answers were dangerously out-spoken. 'Your opinions are still those of a Christian,' said the Emir reprovingly; and the Frenchman realized with bitterness that, sooner or later, war was inevitable. The Emir had recently sent his Commander-in-Chief Miloud ben Arach and Ben Duran on a mission to France. Acting on the advice of the Jew, Abd el Kader had endowed the mission liberally so that a few French *députés*—a minister even—might be bribed to support the Arab cause. Too late Roches explained to him that 'such shameful transactions were impossible' in France, and that in any case there were already enough unpaid orators who clamoured in the Chamber against the occupation of Algeria.

The money necessary for this bribery had been extorted from the Koulouglis. Roches watched with apprehension the Emir's growing severity towards this unfortunate race; yet he did not dare to interfere. All Koulouglis living in Médéa and Miliana had been driven away to Tagdempt, he learned, so that they would be safely out of the way of French influence. Was Khadidja in Tagdempt? During the spring Roches accompanied Abd el Kader on a tour which included his new capital. The Frenchman at once set about making secret inquiries about Khadidja, only to discover that she had left the town a month before with a number of families who were being exiled to Morocco.

One other incident took place before the court left Médéa—that of the meeting between Roches and his father who, at the suggestion of Abd el Kader, came to visit his son. The Emir thought that the elder man might be suitable to serve as his agent in Algiers, since the son's presence in the Arab camp would be a guarantee of the father's good faith. Léon Roches rode out of the town to meet his father whom he welcomed with Arab formality;

but in the privacy of his tent they embraced one another with tears. To Léon the sight of his father brought back a flood of memories of his own country, of his family, of the life from which he had voluntarily cut himself off. After business had been settled, the two Frenchmen were received privately by the Emir. The elder Roches implored Abd el Kader to give him back his son: 'I have only one child, and you have taken him from me,' he said with tears in his eyes. 'It is God who has taken him,' replied the Emir; 'but he is free, and if he swears to live as a good Moslem I will not stop him from going with you.' Summoning up all his courage Léon refused. Abd el Kader appreciated the youth's loyalty, and his affection for him increased noticeably from that day.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AÏN-MAHDI

AS far as Biskra almost all the inland tribes were now allied with Abd el Kader. One district alone remained aloof—the oasis of Aïn-Mahdi, some two hundred miles south of Algiers.

The *marabout* of Aïn-Mahdi, the famous Tcdjini, was hereditary chief of one of the most important religious fraternities of North Africa. His brother and uncle had met their death at the hands of the Governor of Oran, under the Turkish régime; he was shy of becoming involved in another war, and, like the Bey of Constantine, wished nothing so much as to be left alone. But the Emir, though he appreciated the danger and difficulty of a campaign against the members of a religious community so widely respected and whose adherents were to be found even among his own troops, felt that a potential rival could not safely be allowed to remain in a state of unsympathetic neutrality to the south of his new empire.

Abd el Kader first tried persuasion, but the *marabout* remained unmoved. He was too weak, he said, to fight the Christians. Allah had fixed the hour of their arrival, and would, in His own good time, appoint the hour of their departure. He was a man of God, and would neither fight the Christians nor recognize the authority of Abd el Kader.

The Emir accepted the challenge. He established a base at Tagdempt, and in June his small army—some four thousand men—set out on its six-day march to Aïn-Mahdi. A number of women and children, carried in *aâtatiches*, or curtained cages placed on the backs of camels, went with them. They spent their time grinding corn or sieving flour; the men hunted gazelles and antelopes with salukis or falcons. *Fantorias* (mock-battles) beguiled the way and served to keep the soldiers in training. Roches describes one of these engagements which are an ever popular feature of Arab horsemanship: ‘The cavalry . . . divides itself into two equal groups, and each group takes up position round the *aâtatiches* containing its women. The two groups, which are supposed to represent two hostile tribes on the march, withdraw to a certain

distance and, on a signal from the chiefs, the attack begins. First single horsemen come forward, challenging one another like Homeric heroes and engaging in single combat. Then the main forces close in, and the mêlée becomes general. The object of the combatants is to carry off the *aâtatiches*. The women inside these cages, who until now have remained hidden from sight, suddenly pull back the curtains which conceal them and, with hair dishevelled and eyes flashing, join in the changing fortunes of the fight. They urge on their defenders, praise the daring of the more adventurous, hurl words of contempt at those who seem to hesitate, shout abuse at the enemy and defy them with frenzied gestures. The camels which carry them are taken and retaken; the confusion is indescribable, and the zeal of the combatants such that, if the chiefs were not present as umpires, the mock-battles would soon develop into the real thing.'

Abd el Kader halted his army a short day's march from Aïn-Mahdi. He counted upon the immediate submission of the town, and was unprepared for a siege; but Tedjini remained defiant, and returned a dignified but firm reply to his summons to surrender. Can we lay siege to the town?' the Emir inquired of Roches. The Frenchman answered that he must see the fortifications before giving an opinion, and volunteered to visit Tedjini on a 'mission of peace' which would enable him to spy out the land. Abd el Kader warned him that he was going to certain death. 'Have you not taught me,' replied Roches, 'that the hour of death is written in the book of Allah, and that man can neither advance nor retard it?' 'Then go,' said the Emir, 'and may Allah cover you with the cloak of His protection.'

Roches accompanied by a guide and a servant, set out the following evening on his dangerous mission. Next morning he saw, for the first time, the limitless expanse of desert stretched out before him and, in the extreme distance, a small speck of green—the oasis of Aïn-Mahdi. The town, he saw as he drew nearer, stood on rising ground, and was surrounded by fine gardens whose palms and pomegranate trees masked the fortifications. Having examined the oasis from all sides, Roches approached the northern gates which were walled up; he shouted, and was informed that strangers were not allowed to enter. As he turned away he heard a voice addressing him by name: '*Attendez, Monsieur Roches! je vais obtenir du marabout qu'il vous permette d'entrer.*' A rope was lowered from the battlements, and the astonished Frenchman was

hauled over the parapet into the city. The mystery of the voice was soon explained; it was that of a French deserter whom he had known in Algiers, and who had persuaded his master to admit Roches on the ground that he was a deserter like himself.

A crowd soon collected, and Roches found himself carried off to the palace. Here he was left waiting in a courtyard surrounded by a marble colonnade and separated from the harem by a mosaic grille. Suddenly a mulatto boy entered, and put into his hands a string of beads. ‘This chaplet my father the *marabout* gives those to whom he accords *aman*,’ he explained: ‘Messaouda has seen you,’ he added, and without further explanation disappeared into the harem. Hardly had the boy vanished when a gang of sturdy, ferocious-looking Negroes burst into the courtyard and dragged Roches by his *burnous* into a richly-decorated audience chamber, at the far end of which Tedjini was reclining on a divan covered with gold cushions. He seemed to be about forty-five years old, of dignified appearance, with well-formed, bronzed features. The *marabout* cross-questioned him about France, and finally offered him the choice between a well-paid and honourable position in his service, and death. Outside could be heard the shouts of the mob clamouring for the execution of the spy. ‘Neither threats nor promises will make me betray my master,’ answered Roches; ‘let your slaves murder a man who has come to you without suspicion, and who holds the gage you give as a sign of *aman*;’ and he raised the chaplet above his head. The effect of the gesture was overwhelming, and for a moment Tedjini remained speechless; then, ordering his guard to withdraw, he stammered out: ‘Where did you get it?’ ‘I asked your son for it,’ answered Roches, ‘and he did not dare to refuse.’

Tedjini recognized the hand of fate. Not only was Roches’ life spared, but the *marabout*, fully confident that the town was proof against all attack, gave permission for the Frenchman to be shown round its defences. Nothing, Roches observed, seemed lacking to make the little oasis impregnable: there were vast stores of corn, butter, salt, dates and firewood; five wells provided an ample supply of water; the walls were high and strongly built; the defenders, though few in number, looked stout-hearted and determined enough. ‘Can Abd el Kader take that?’ asked Tedjini when Roches had seen everything. ‘He will, if it takes him ten years to do so,’ answered the Frenchman loyally.

Roches left Ain-Mahdi with but one regret—he had not dared

to inquire further about the woman Messaouda who had saved his life. Was she the same Messaouda who had nursed Khadidja, he wondered; and if so, was Khadidja herself in the town? He reached Abd el Kader's camp, and was warmly received by the Emir who had almost given up hope of his return. Together the two discussed the possibility of laying siege to the town.

The Emir decided to move his camp forward to within a mile of Aïn-Mahdi, and early in June his four small and antiquated cannon were trained upon the town walls. But the first two attacks met with little success, and each time Abd el Kader's losses were heavy. On the second occasion the walls were breached; but the gap revealed that the enemy had been busy constructing a second wall within the outer one, a defence which resisted all attack. There was nothing to be done but to wait for the arrival of four hundred shells promised by Valée and four mortars from Abd er Rahman who, after some consideration, had decided to support his *khalifa's* cause in this civil war.

In September negotiation was tried again, and Tedjini showed himself willing to come to an agreement. He offered to pay a considerable sum of money, a part of which he actually sent to Abd el Kader as a token of his good faith, and to give his son as hostage. But the Emir was insatiable in his demands; he now insisted on being given leave to enter the town with his whole army to pray at the mosque. Tedjini, secretly warned by a member of his brotherhood who served with Abd el Kader, that mischief was afoot, refused permission on the reasonable enough excuse that the mosque was too small; but he pressed the Emir to come alone. A deadlock was soon reached, and in October the uneasy truce came to an end.

The Emir seemed little discouraged by the slowness of his progress. He tightened the blockade and put Roches in charge of the mining operations which were now to be tried. But the townsmen, kept well informed by spies, built counter-mines, and there was some rough hand-to-hand fighting in those gloomy tunnels. At length the ammunition and mortars arrived; but their effectiveness did not come up to expectation, and the enemy amused themselves by returning with mock courtesy the shells which failed to explode. To make matters worse, convoys bringing provisions to the Emir were pillaged; and soon the poor quality of the food to which the men were reduced brought on dysentery and fever. No remedies beyond the application of poultices of

melted butter and branding with hot irons were available for the wounded, few of whom had the physical strength to make a recovery. At last a daring surprise attack, led by Roches, recovered some of the provisions which had been captured, and there was plenty in the camp again.

Roches himself was ill more than once. In October he succumbed to a bad attack of fever, and for several days his life hung in the balance. One evening as he lay delirious in Abd el Kader's tent he felt the Emir's soft hand upon his forehead. The effect was almost hypnotic, and he soon fell into a deep sleep. He awoke suddenly in the night to find his mind clear and his body refreshed. Before him was being enacted a scene which he never forgot. 'The smoking wick of an Arab lamp scarcely lit the Emir's large tent. He was standing there, three paces from me; he thought I was asleep. His arms, raised as high as his head, lifted up his *burnous* and his milk-white *haïk* so that they hung in superb folds. His magnificent blue eyes, fringed with black lashes, were gazing upwards; his lips, slightly apart, seemed still to be uttering a prayer, yet they were motionless. He had reached a state of ecstasy. His mind was so set upon heaven that his feet no longer seemed to touch the ground. . . . Thus must the great saints of Christianity have prayed.'

Roches was soon well again. With the aid of a Hungarian deserter who was in charge of the Emir's artillery he was working on a vast tunnel to undermine Tedjini's palace. A compass, a theodolite, and a fuse provided by Valée, had been fetched from Algiers; and every possible precaution had been taken to prevent spies from discovering the entrance and direction of the tunnel, which had been constructed some sixteen feet below ground level in order to pass under the town moat. The secret of the mine was not made known even to the Emir himself. After six weeks the work was finished. Roches viewed his achievement with mixed feelings: he could not forget that Tedjini had spared his life, and he had become increasingly convinced, though without the shadow of a proof, that Khadidja was within the walls of Ain-Mahdi.

But before the mine could be fired a caravan appeared from the north bringing the Emir's brother Sidi Mohammed Said, peace-loving *marabout* of the plain of Eghris, and his brother-in-law Mustapha ben Thami, *Khalifa* of Mascara. They had come to offer their services as mediators in a conflict which they deplored. 'Forgiveness is next to godliness,' quoted Sidi Mohammed; and

Abd el Kader allowed himself to be persuaded. Nor could Tedjini refuse to receive the *marabout* from the north, and a meeting took place on November 19 in Aïn-Mahdi, Roches also being present. Mustapha disclosed the secret of the mine; and when Roches had confirmed the truth of his statement upon oath, Tedjini and his counsellors believed him. They knew that in any case the city could not hold out much longer. The terms finally agreed upon were hard for the brave defenders: Tedjini was to evacuate the town within forty days and to pay for the cost of the war, but he might remove his treasure. The Emir would withdraw from the town while it was being evacuated, taking Tedjini's son as hostage.

On December 2 the six-months' siege was raised; Abd el Kader had succeeded where, fifty years before, the Turks had failed. 'The capitulation,' observed Roches, 'was much more glorious for the besieged than for the besiegers.' The following day the Emir reviewed his regulars and decorated those who had served him well. Roches received the highest honour—the Order of the Seven Plumes—and, in addition, the gift of a magnificent black thoroughbred named 'Salem'.

But the fate of Khadidja was ever uppermost in his thoughts, and he hastened to get into touch with Tedjini's son. The boy was brought in, dazed and frightened; he scarcely seemed to recognize Roches, and the Frenchman could find no opportunity of speaking with him privately. At last, however, Messaouda was discovered. She brought the news he dreaded yet half expected.

'She fell at my feet, sobbing. Vainly I questioned her; she was unable to utter a single word. May God spare my bitterest enemy the torments I suffered during those long minutes of suspense! At last the poor creature struggled to her feet and, staring me straight in the face, uttered through bloodless lips two syllables which I shall hear till my dying moment: "*Méret!*"' (She is dead!)

'If grief could kill, I should have died then. To this day I cannot recall unmoved that heart-rending scene,' wrote Roches more than forty years later. He listened, half-dazed, as Messaouda struggled to find words to tell the whole tragic story. From day to day Khadidja had grown more weak and pale. It was she who had seen Roches from an upper window as he waited in the palace courtyard, she who had persuaded Tedjini's mother to send her grandson with the chaplet. The sudden joy had been too great a shock for Khadidja, and the strain of the siege had aggravated her illness; she died with the name of her beloved 'Lioune' upon her lips.

'I buried her with my own hands . . .' Messaouda concluded. 'Her husband was killed by a cannon-ball a few days later. Their bodies lie together in the mausoleum of Tedjini's ancestors.'

While Aïn-Mahdi was being evacuated, Roches was despatched on a mission to Touggourt, whose chief—or 'Sultan' as he rather pompously styled himself—had sent valuable gifts to the Emir. Among other interesting observations made during this journey was the discovery of artesian wells with borings up to 300 feet deep. Two years later Roches reported the existence of these to the French government and was laughed at for his pains.

On the eve of the *Aïd es Seghir* (the Little Feast) Roches rejoined Abd el Kader, and was present at the celebrations which were staged with especial splendour to impress the representatives of thirty tribes who had assembled to do him homage. Shortly before dawn on the morning of the feast (December 24, 1838) the Emir rode out on to the broad plain which stretches to the northwest of Tadjmout where the army was encamped. A huge crowd followed him. Alighting from his horse, he knelt down with his face towards the east. Ten paces behind him, in a single line, knelt five hundred chieftains; and behind them again, in parallel rows, some twelve thousand Arabs

'Just as the first rays of the sun touched with silver the graceful palm-tops of Tadjmout, Abd el Kader rose to his feet, raised his arms towards the heavens and cried: '*Allah ou ekbar!*'!—'God is the greatest!' At the same moment the twelve thousand worshippers rose and repeated: '*Allah ou ekbar!*'! This tremendous acclamation in the midst of the desert's silence; the neighing of five hundred richly caparisoned horses whose *sais* could hardly hold them under control; the genuflexions of these twelve thousand Moslems in biblical costume, now bowing till their foreheads touched the ground, now rising with their arms upstretched and repeating the profession of faith of Islam; finally Abd el Kader himself, who could be clearly heard reciting verses from the Koran—this whole scene, lit by the slanting rays of the rising sun, presented an indescribable picture such as one does not see twice in a lifetime.' Thus Abd el Kader, warrior and priest, sought to build up the scaffolding of the great theocratic empire which was to stretch from Morocco to the frontiers of Tunis.

Some time was still due to elapse before Aïn-Mahdi could be occupied. Roches, invited by the chieftains of three important

tribes to go with them on a hunting expedition, asked the Emir's permission to accept. Leave was readily given, for Abd el Kader, though he knew nothing about Khadidja, had noticed that the Frenchman was silent and depressed. Now for the first time Roches was to see Arab life such as he had always imagined it—simple, patriarchal life unchanged for thousands of years, untouched by our civilization. There was a poetry, new yet half-remembered, in the return at sunset of the troop of riders from their days' hawking. 'First come the chiefs, each with one falcon on the shoulder and a second upon the wrist. These noble birds, their heads covered with hoods trimmed with embroidery and ostrich-feathers, are held by small silver chains hooked to rings which are attached to their feet and hung with bells. The chiefs take a certain pride in leaving traces of bird-droppings on their *burnouses*; it is a sign of nobility. Behind the chiefs come the other horsemen and the servants, the former holding reserve falcons on their wrists, the latter with leashed salukis. Thus in the Middle Ages must our great lords have returned to their manors from the chase. The great *aghás* of the desert, by the absolute power that they exercise over their tribes, by the perpetual state of warfare in which they live, and by their customs, represent for me our feudal barons whose chronicles I read with so much pleasure. How often have I regretted that I did not live in that age of poetry and chivalry!'

In January the evacuation of Ain-Mahdi was complete, and the Emir returned there with his Regulars. Roches' first care was to visit the tomb of Khadidja. Messaouda had described to him the stone which covered it, and he had no difficulty in finding the spot. There, in the cool solitude of the mausoleum he knelt down in prayer beside the grave of the woman he had loved. 'Oh! how her spirit must have trembled at the sight of my grief,' he wrote. 'Why may I not bear away with me the mortal remains of her whom I loved so passionately!'

Abd el Kader was uncertain whether to hold the town or not; in the end he decided to destroy it. Roches' mine was declared to be still in working order, and on January 12 it was exploded. The calculations had been accurately made, and when the dust had subsided the spectators saw nothing but a vast mass of ruins in the place where once Tedjini's palace had stood. Soldiers and tribesmen soon completed the destruction of the town, and two days later the army turned its face once more towards the north.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ABD EL KADER THE ADMINISTRATOR

IN 1838, by his tireless energy and determination, Abd el Kader had brought the majority of the rebellious tribes to heel; the year 1839 saw him at the height of his power. More than two thirds of Algeria acknowledged his rule; the French were once more confined within three small and isolated tracts of coastal territory; and even the Arab minority which was jealous of his success no longer dared to oppose him openly. He was now free to turn his attention to the organization of his kingdom.

Two vast problems confronted him: first, that of uniting a heterogeneous population; and second, that of 'converting his spiritual authority, which had been won and held by his call to the Holy War, into a temporal authority with qualified agents for the levying of taxes, for administering justice, and for raising contingents.'

The country was at this time divided into eight *khalifaliks*, the most important of which were those of Tlemcen, Mascara, Miliana and Médéa. In these provinces his *khalifas* Bou Hamidi, Ben Thami, Ben Allal (Sidi Embarek) and El Berkani ruled with an almost free hand. 'In spite of Abd el Kader's efforts,' says Azan, 'these *khalifaliks* formed a confederation of provinces round the central province of Mascara rather than a united kingdom.' Each *khalifalik* was divided into *aghaliks*, ruled by *aghlas*; an *aghlik* was further subdivided into tribes, each under a *kaïd* and a number of subordinate *sheikhs*. These officials administered justice, and collected tithes and taxes which were paid partly in money, partly in kind. The *kaïds* were responsible for the construction of vast underground granaries for the use of the Emir's armies in the field. This system of government worked when things were going well; but at the first sign of disaster, looting and indiscipline began. Only Bou Hamidi and Sidi Embarek ruled their *khalifaliks* with a hand firm enough to put a stop to these disorders.

Justice was administered by *kadis* and, as in all Islamic countries, was purely religious in character and based upon the Koran. Appeal

was allowed (in theory, at any rate), even encouraged by Abd el Kader. He himself presided over a tribunal of *ulemas* which was the final court of appeal, though he sometimes chose to refer doubtful cases to Egypt or Morocco. As a rule his judgements were swift and inexorable and his sentences immediately carried out, Abd el Kader indicating the punishment with a gesture. If he raised his hand, the victim was placed in prison; if he held it horizontally, he was executed; if he lowered it, he was bastinadoed.

Religious instruction was conducted by *talebs* in the various *zaouïas*. Good teachers were so scarce, that more than one, Bellemare tells us, was saved from a well-merited death sentence because he was indispenable. Abd el Kader attached great importance to the collection of books, and intended to form a central library at Tagdempt. All persons found guilty of damaging manuscripts were severely punished, and those who brought him fine copies were sure to be well rewarded. The choicest pieces in his collection were destroyed in 1843 when the French surprised his camp; and it was a bitter grief to him 'to follow the traces of the French column returning to Médéa, by means of leaves torn from the books which he had collected together with so much labour.'

Morality, which had grown lax, was enforced, and prostitution forbidden. The use of wine and playing-cards was punished; and even tobacco, though not expressly condemned on religious grounds, was disallowed since it led to extravagance. Thus under Abd el Kader's firm rule the simple, patriarchal way of living returned; during the short respite from war, trade prospered, and a security never before known flourished throughout the length of his kingdom.

But Abd el Kader had no illusions; the peace was only a truce. Though he hoped to postpone the outbreak of war for as long as possible, he worked feverishly to prepare for the inevitable day when the conflict would be resumed. He relied upon a three-fold line of defence. Round Algiers and Oran the Hadjoutes and the Gharaba kept the ports under close observation, and formed, as it were, the advance-guard of his resistance. Parallel to the sea, and at a distance of roughly fifty miles from it, came a line of fortified towns—Tlemcen, Mascara, Miliana and Médéa. All these he was prepared to destroy, if need be, to prevent them from becoming bases for the French; and he later declared that the refusal of the Arabs to make this sacrifice when the time came, was the real cause

of his failure to stem the advance of the Christians. Behind these towns came a second line—Sebdou, Saïda, Tagdempt, Taza, Boghar and Biskra. Of these Tagdempt was the most important, for it also commanded the southern trade routes. It was, said Abd el Kader, ‘a thorn in the eye of the independent desert tribes,’ and mixing his metaphor, he added, ‘they could not flee nor trouble me any more, for I held them by the stomach.’

The strategy of the Arab leader, which provoked the admiration of Wellington, consisted in avoiding pitched battles, in harassing columns on the march, in ambushes and in surprise attacks. His cavalry did not hesitate to retreat even before inferior forces. ‘To do the maximum amount of damage to the enemy without receiving any yourself,’ said the Emir; ‘that was the advice I gave them.’ Again and again he gave the slip to the ponderously pursuing French columns whose superior equipment and artillery merely handicapped them. The Emir perfectly appreciated his advantage: ‘When you stand on the shore,’ he said, ‘and watch the fish swimming about freely in the sea, it seems as if you had only to stretch out your hand to grasp them; yet it needs all the skill and the nets of the fisherman to master them. So it is with the Arabs . . .’ It took the French more than ten years to find the solution to the problem.

Abd el Kader’s regular army consisted, Daumas tells us, of 8,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 240 gunners. These were divided equally among the eight *khalifas*. Army regulations were elaborately drawn up in a book, where minute details could be found as to discipline, promotion, rations, the cost of uniforms and the like. In making it, the Emir was no doubt greatly assisted by French and other European deserters who had joined his ranks. ‘Officers and soldiers of various arms had uniforms of different colours which were exactly described,’ says Azan. ‘Everything was fixed down to the smallest detail, even the quality of the cloth being stated. The usual headdress was a red *chéchia* (a kind of tarboosh). Badges included epaulettes, crescents worn on the chest, and stripes on the sleeves. Inscriptions on the epaulettes or the crescents of various ranks were also fixed. Often they were pious invocations; but commanding officers (*raïs*) had on one of their gold epaulettes the following words: “With those in authority, patience is the key to divine aid.” Any officer or soldier who left off his uniform was rigorously punished.’

The sick were looked after in special hospitals by attendants

who were required to be 'intelligent, cheerful with the patients, respectful, and interested in their work'. Doctors employed the traditional rough and ready remedies. Abd el Kader was conscious of their inadequacy, and had plans for founding a school of medicine as soon as circumstances allowed. 'It is written in the Holy Books,' he said, 'that every Sultan who does not have the art of healing taught in his empire rebels against God.'

The Arab artillery was feeble and antiquated, and consisted of some twenty field pieces and a number of old bronze and iron cannon. Berbrugger, who visited the Emir's camp in January 1838, found only four cannon, 'three... mounted on poor carriages with solid wheels, the fourth in the European manner. On one could be read "*Dupont, commissaire des fontes royales à Rochefort*". It was decorated with drums, turbans and crescents. A second was inscribed: "*Willem Hagewaert me fecit, Hagae, 1620*". All four were carried on mule-back.

Besides the regular army there was the vast but fluctuating horde of irregulars, mostly cavalry, whose numbers rose and fell with Arab victories and defeats—for with the Arabs, nothing succeeded like success.

From de France's description we can form some impression of the Arab camp as it appeared in 1836. The outermost ring of tents was reserved for the infantry; then came those of the cavalry, each tent containing fifteen or twenty men whose horses were tethered by their forefeet outside the entrance. In the very centre of the camp stood Abd el Kader's tent. This, though simple, was more elaborate than the rest. It was thirty feet long and eleven feet high, and placed, like every Arab tent, so that it opened towards the east. The inside was lined with hangings of various colours covered with arabesques and crescents in red, blue, green and yellow. A woollen curtain divided it into two unequal parts, in the smaller of which was a mattress on which the Emir slept. At the further end there was an entrance for the use of Ben Fakha and Ben Abou, the slaves especially attached to his person. On the ground in one corner lay four silken flags rolled up; every Friday these were unfurled and flown outside the entrance, and on the march they were carried before the Emir by four cavalrymen. In the main part of the tent was a divan, beside and behind which were placed the chests containing Abd el Kader's clothes and money. A carpet thrown over the whole gave it something of the appearance of a modern sofa. The only other furniture was a

stool covered with red silk which the Emir used as a mounting-block, though more usually the faithful Ben Fakha offered his back for the purpose. The royal tent, which was open by day and accessible to all, was under the guard of thirty Negroes. When camp was struck, it was always the last to be taken down; and while the rest were being dismantled, the Emir continued with his prayers. Then he came out and seated himself by the entrance to give audience to his *marabouts* and chiefs. Behind his tent were the kitchens, the flocks of sheep and goats, and the transport camels.

An open avenue stretched from the entrance of Abd el Kader's tent to the edge of the camp, where an old cannon had been set up. This, at that time, appears to have been the only piece of artillery in the camp, and de France observed that it was in a deplorable state of disrepair. It was mounted on a broken French carriage, and the touch-hole was so large that the powder flew from it in a stream of fire which badly burned the unfortunate gunners who had charge of it. Its only function was to fire salutes when victories, real or imagined, were being celebrated. De France was at Tagdempt when this cannon was hauled up to the ruins to fire a salute in honour of the foundation of the new capital. The cannon was loaded with stones, and so poorly aimed that the shots fell in the camp where, after each firing, there was a cry of 'Great Sultan!' followed by a scramble to take cover from falling rock.

The soldiers received their meagre rations of biscuits and *couscous* at dawn and at four o'clock in the afternoon. By day there was nothing for them to do, except on the rare occasions when the *agha* of the infantry attempted to put into practice some of the drill he had once learned from a German deserter. The cavalry wore baggy trousers and a red jacket covered with a *haik* and a *burnous*; the infantry a woollen vest and trousers under a black, hooded jacket. Three times a day a band played before the Emir's tent. Its repertoire was scanty, and when Abd el Kader had had enough he dismissed it with a gesture. By night an old Arab would squat there for hours at a time, intoning his monotonous litany:

The Sultan is great, but Mohammed is still greater.

The Sultan is very great; he is generous, brave and holy.

The *marabouts* of Mecca are very great and holy.

The Sultan has fine horses; the Sultan has many horses, and they are all excellent.

The Sultan has immense treasures and much powder.  
The Arabs have fruitful plains; they have mountains covered  
with trees, and many rivers flow from them.  
We have beautiful women.  
Our horses are swift; no other horses can keep up with them.  
Our camels are very strong; we have great herds of cattle and  
sheep.  
Our guns are very good.  
We have plenty of powder—plenty of powder.  
Let us pray that all Christian dogs may perish.'

When we consider what Abd el Kader achieved with his limited means during the short interlude of peace, we cannot but be amazed. Though his real greatness was perhaps most apparent at those moments when, deserted by all, he continued to believe in his mission, he showed it no less in peace-time by his superb powers of organization and leadership. Yet his plans for the future of Algeria were foredoomed to failure. 'His fundamental mistake,' says Azan, 'was that he wanted to create a Moslem nation in Algeria. The whole past of North Africa, even the comparison of the men of an Arab *douar*<sup>1</sup> and those of a Kabyle village, should have shown him that such a dream could never be realized . . . Even with the administrative system that he conceived, Abd el Kader could not establish any other ties between the various Moslems in Algeria than those which were dependent upon the Holy War; if the war came to an end, the desire for independence must inevitably return and break up the empire formed with the object of fighting the enemies of the faith.'

<sup>1</sup> Group of tents.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE IRON GATES

THE treaty of Tafna had enabled France to avenge her defeat at Constantine; it had also given Abd el Kader time to organize his empire and to strengthen his defences. But it was inevitable, sooner or later, that a treaty so carelessly drawn up should lead to disputes. Already bad blood had been made by the refusal of the French to accept Abd el Kader's agent in Algiers, a man named Garavini. 'I chose a Christian from your own town,' wrote the Emir to Valée, 'and you refuse to have him. Since you violate all recognized procedure, since you oppose what I deem useful for my service and try to humiliate me, I am prepared to break off all relations with you.' Garavini was replaced, but Abd el Kader did nothing; he was not yet ready.

The real trouble with the Tafna Treaty proved to be the clause defining the limit of French territory to the east of Algiers. Endless discussions ensued as to the interpretation of the word *fauq*. Valée maintained that French control reached 'to the Oued Kaddara and beyond'—as far beyond as he cared to go; the Emir declared that it stretched 'to the Oued Kaddara and *above*'—that is to say as far as mountains dominating the Oued Kaddara, and no further. 'Let us make an experiment,' suggested Abd el Kader. 'Take any twenty Arabs you like, and ask them the meaning of the word *fauq*. If they say that the natural meaning of the word can, by any conceivable twist, be made to signify *beyond*, then you may have all the territory between the Oued Kaddara and the Province of Constantine; if not . . .' Valée wisely declined to make the test.

In the Chamber Bugaud admitted the defects of his treaty, but pleaded in extenuation that he had been 'extremely pressed for time'. At Valée's suggestion, the Emir now sent Miloud ben Arach and Ben Duran to France to examine the doubtful clause. To the Governor-General it seemed that this mission might be made to appear an acknowledgement of French sovereignty, while Abd el Kader saw in it a welcome postponement of the crisis,

so that both were satisfied. On their way through Algiers the ambassadors had a hasty and fruitless discussion with Valée during which the latter hinted at a possible amendment of the treaty; then they sailed for France.

The Paris visit was a failure. The ambassadors duly presented their gift of six Arab horses to Louis-Philippe and were shown the sights of the town, but when they touched on the subject of their mission 'their mouths were stopped with an evasion or a compliment'; Valée had told his government that he wanted to deal with the matter himself. On their return the Governor-General produced his amended version of the treaty—four additional clauses which, among other things, awarded the whole of the disputed territory to France. Ben Arach knew well enough that Abd el Kader would never consent to them, and he told Valée that he himself was not empowered to sign. 'Then why have you come?' asked the latter angrily. In the end Ben Arach weakly agreed to attach his seal, and to submit the new clauses to the Emir for ratification.

Abd el Kader was at that moment encamped outside Aïn-Mahdi. In January, 1839, a few days after the mine had been exploded, Ben Arach joined his master at Tagdempt and was soundly reprimanded for his failure. Yet France had been the greater loser by the delay, for she had missed the opportunity of striking while Abd el Kader was tied down in the south.

For some time now, both sides had realized that war was inevitable, but neither wished to be the aggressor. Bugeaud had confessed to the Chamber that his treaty had been nothing more than a device for gaining time, adding rather naïvely that '*les traités n'avaient jamais lié des nations que lorsqu'ils étaient conformes à leurs intérêts*' (June 8, 1838). Two months after this, Abd el Kader, writing confidentially to a friend in Fez, had said: 'We should not have postponed war against the French if we had had the necessary means and munitions'; and Daumas, the French consul at Mascara, reported to his government that if the Emir had been really anxious for peace he would have devoted his energies to repairing the towns which the French had destroyed, and not to amassing arms and ammunition.

Abd el Kader was in a dilemma: it seemed to him that he must either accept Valée's amended clauses or break openly with France. When an envoy from Valée, Major de Salles, arrived with ostentatious presents and pressed him to sign, the Emir, in a last attempt at

delay, announced that he must first put the matter to an assembly of his *khalifas*. De Salles was kept waiting while the *khalifas* were collected; when finally they arrived, they unanimously refused ('as the Emir had foreseen, or rather ordered,' says Roches) to make the slightest alteration in the existing treaty.

Yet war was still averted. Roches was doing all he could to persuade the Emir and his *khalifas* of the folly of fighting, and to convince them that, in spite of anything that might be said in the French Chamber, France had come to Algeria to stay. During the spring Abd el Kader tried the effect of personal letters to Louis-Philippe, to the Queen, to Thiers and to Gérard. Roches translated these, and no doubt had helped to draft them. To Louis-Philippe the Emir sent a clear and concise statement of the Arab point of view:

'Since the foundation of Islam, Moslems and Christians have been at war. For ages this was a sacred obligation on both sects; but the Christians, neglecting their religion and its precepts, have come to look upon war merely as a means of worldly aggrandisement. To the true Moslem, on the contrary, war against the Christians is a religious duty; how much more so when Christians come and invade Moslem territory! According to this principle, I deviated from the rules laid down in our sacred books when, two years ago, I made with you, King of the Christians, a treaty of peace; and more especially when I endeavoured to consolidate this peace by every means in my power. You know the duties imposed by the Koran on every Moslem prince; you ought, therefore, to give me credit for having taken upon myself to relax, as regards you, the rigour of its precepts.'

'But now you demand a sacrifice from me which is so formally opposed to my religion that I cannot submit to it; and you are too just to impose it upon me as a necessity. You call upon me to abandon tribes whose submission I have received, who came to me of their own accord to pay me the taxes prescribed by the Koran, and who besought me, and still beseech me, to govern them. I have myself traversed their territory, which, moreover, is beyond the limits of that which the treaty reserved to France; can you now wish, by another treaty, that I should order these tribes to submit to the yoke of the Christians? No. If the French are my friends they can never desire to bring about a situation which would lower and degrade their ally in the eyes of his people. They would not for the sake of a few miserable tribes



BATTLE OF TÉNIA, May 1840

The French army occupies the Mouzaia Pass

(From a painting by Horace Vernet in the Versailles Museum)

(Photo Girandon)



—and how little does it matter to the French how these tribes are ruled—place me in the terrible position of being compelled either to break the law or to renounce a peace which is so desirable for both of us. . . .

‘Great King of the French! God has appointed each of us to govern some of His creatures. You are in a position far superior to mine, by the number, power, and riches of your subjects; but on both of us he has imposed the obligation of making our peoples happy. Examine with me our positions, and you will agree that on you alone depends the happiness of both our peoples. “Sign!” you say; “if you do not, your refusal means war.” Well, I will not sign; and yet I want peace, nothing but peace. . . .

‘If war breaks out again, there will be no more trade which might confer such inestimable advantages on the country; there will be no security for the colonists; prices will go up, and production down; the blood of your soldiers will be shed in vain; it will be a partisan war to the death. I am not so foolish as to imagine that I can openly make headway against your troops; but I can harass them ceaselessly. I shall lose ground, no doubt; but then I shall have on my side a knowledge of the country, the frugality and hardiness of my troops, and—more than all this—the arm of God, who supports the oppressed.

‘If, on the contrary, you wish for peace, our two countries will be as one; the least of your subjects will enjoy the most perfect security amongst the tribes; the two people will intermix more and more every day; and you will have the glory of having introduced into our lands that civilization of which the Christians are the apostles . . .’

All the letters remained unanswered.

Tension continued throughout the summer. The French Government now chose to pretend that Ben Arach, by attaching his seal to the amended clauses of the treaty, had officially handed over the disputed territory to France. In June Abd el Kader was near Constantine, vainly trying to persuade the Kabyles of Grand Kabylia to support him. Agents sent to Morocco met with better success; they preached the *jihad*, and returned with arms and ammunition. They also brought, at the Emir’s request, the *kafstan* (tunic) which conferred upon Abd el Kader the title of *Khalifa of the Sultan*. In July a great gathering of chiefs was held at Taza, where the Emir publicly assumed the *kafstan*. In secret session, war

was decided upon and plans laid for the attack which was to be made at the next French infringement of the treaty.

Roches had spent the spring inspecting Abd el Kader's arms factories. He reached Taza two days after the fateful decision had been taken. He was horrified at the news: 'Farewell to my hopes and illusions,' he wrote. 'The only question now was how to get back to the French lines. I was not blind to the terrible obstacles I should encounter, but death was better than the awful prospect of being forced to fight against my own countrymen.' He made a last effort to dissuade Abd el Kader, but soon saw that it was useless.

But there was worse news in store for Roches. For some time past the Emir had been telling him that he ought to marry, and that he proposed giving him a member of his own family for wife. Roches had tried to decline the honour, but such suggestions had to be viewed in the light of commands. Abd el Kader now sent for him. 'Because of the preparations which we are making,' he said, 'I shall have to live at Tagdempt; you will live there too. I have ordered a house to be got ready for you, and on your arrival you will marry the daughter of the former *hakem* of Médéa. The matter is fixed. She is used to the town, and her ways are more like your own than those of the girl of my own family whom I had originally intended for you.' Roches started to protest, but the Emir cut him short: 'Your marriage has been decided by the Council,' he said; 'you must obey.' Three weeks later the unfortunate Frenchman, still protesting, found himself a married man.

Summer turned to autumn, yet still the war clouds had not broken. Roches was at Tagdempt, reluctantly trying to improve the output of the arms factory there. In the evenings he would talk with the Emir or translate extracts for him from the French newspapers. Valée, meanwhile, was reporting to his government the failure of his efforts to induce Abd el Kader to yield.

France had made up her mind to take action, but was averse from attempting anything in the nature of a permanent occupation of the disputed territory; instead, she decided to make a demonstration march through it. In October 5,000 men were assembled at Constantine under the personal command of the Governor-General. Here they were joined by the duc d'Orléans, who was to accompany the expedition in order to give it greater importance. The secret had been well kept, and the soldiers had no idea for what

purpose they were there; it had, in fact, not yet been decided whether to march direct to Algiers across country or to limit the provocation to a tour from Sétif to Bougie across Little Kabylia. Valée's secret intention was to try the former, but it suited his plans to let the Arabs imagine that he was intending only the latter.

The duc d'Orléans has left a detailed journal of this famous march. He describes his arrival at Constantine and his horror at the appalling condition of the hospitals there—conditions which reflected grave discredit on Valée. He found it difficult to bring himself to like the Governor-General, who was, moreover, scarcely less unpopular with his men. His gloomy silence had earned him the nickname of *Vieux Louis XI.* ‘*C'est un b—— qui n'aime pas le soldat,*’ they said of him; ‘*mais le b—— sait bien s'en servir et fait drôlement travailler.*’ There are lively descriptions of the scenery, and of the Roman ruins of Cuicul (Djemilah) whose triumphal arch he hoped to transport stone by stone to Paris as a memorial to the French conquest; of the camp-fires where the strains of the *Marseillaise d'Afrique* echoed among the mountains:

‘Allons enfants de l'Algérie,  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé,  
Contre nous de l'Arabie  
L'étandard sanglant . . .’

If the Prince had a disappointment, it was that Dauzats, the painter whom he had engaged to make a record of the journey, could not be persuaded to work. ‘*Lavora poco e mangia assai,*<sup>1</sup>’ he notes sadly.

D'Orléans wanted to play for safety, to make the shorter and less provocative tour which might still avert a crisis; but Valée thought otherwise. He had documents, he said, which conclusively proved that the Arabs would not go to war; yet whenever the Prince asked to see them, he met with a refusal. At Sétif, the latter was forced to agree, against his better judgement, to the army continuing its march to Algiers. This involved passing through the celebrated *Portes de Fer*, a defile between vertical cliffs nearly a thousand feet high. At its narrowest point the gorge was less than three yards wide. A sudden storm, or a handful of resolute men, could have kept an army at bay; even the Romans

<sup>1</sup> ‘He works little and eats a great deal.’ D'Orléans had a habit of sprinkling his text with foreign tags and phrases, not infrequently misquoted or misspelt.

had never attempted its passage. There was a legend among the Arabs that if ever the Christians tried to pass, the rocks would close in upon them and crush them. The secret of the French plans had been well kept, and the army passed through without opposition, conducted by guides provided by the sheikhs of the Beni-Abbes tribe, the 'Guardians of the Iron Gates' as they were called. On the rock face the sappers engraved the words '*Armée française, 1839*', and the Prince, seizing a bayonet, added a large 'F'<sup>1</sup> 'cut deeply enough to survive, alas, the memory of a life still without meaning for posterity.'

'The halt we made at the end of the gorge was one of the gayest that I have ever known. Every one was in high spirits. The officers asked me, rather vainly, to have a commemorative medal struck. Some of the men were cracking jokes about the Gates of Hell . . . ; others were regretting the fact that there was no more fighting in Africa, and asked that the ministerial decision which put a stop to firing might also put a stop to tents and wet weather . . . ' There was something strangely romantic about these Iron Gates which appealed to the imagination of the men, which transformed in their minds this 'hasty and almost furtive route march' into a glorious military victory.

Five days later, with nothing more than a skirmish or two to report, Valée and the Prince entered Algiers in triumph at the head of the army. The band of the 2nd Light Infantry was playing the hastily-composed '*Marche des Portes de Fer*'; the streets were thronged, and flags and bunting brought out; people 'danced fandangos all night on the rooftops'; and the Jews expressed their joy by celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles all over again. Four whole days and nights were given over to festivities at which, says Azan, 'the enthusiasm displayed was out of all proportion to the difficulties encountered and, in particular, to the results achieved'. The 'Heroes of the Iron Gates'—the whole army from Commander-in-Chief to private—were invited by the Prince to an open air banquet on the Esplanade of the Bab el Oued, where hilarious toasts were drunk far into the night. A wreath of palm leaves, plucked (so it was said) in the gorge itself, was presented to d'Orléans who accepted it shyly—'more as a token of affection from the army than as the symbol of a triumph which he no doubt realized was futile'.

But Valée 'genuinely believed that he had accomplished one of the most glorious acts of the century'. The Emir might, perhaps,

<sup>1</sup>Ferdinand.

write an angry letter or two, but he would bow before the *fait accompli*; Algeria was conquered.

Alas, this victory was for the French but 'the triumph of Caligula over the cockle-shells of Britain'; a rude awakening was in store for the deluded, gullible victors.

On October 31 Roches and the Emir were talking together in the fort at Tagdempt when two cavalrymen were brought in. They were almost dead with exhaustion, for they had covered nearly two hundred and fifty miles in thirty-six hours on relay horses. Trembling with emotion, they stammered out their fateful message—the French had violated the treaty, they had marched through the Iron Gates.

For a moment Abd el Kader was dumb with astonishment and indignation; then he began speaking rapidly in short, jerky phrases, as he often did when he was deeply moved. Suddenly he became calm: 'God be praised!' he said quietly, 'the infidel has broken the peace; we will show him that we are not afraid of war!' Letters were at once dictated to the *khalifas*, ordering them to be in readiness; he himself would go to Mascara and Tlemcen to make the final arrangements for war.

Night fell; the messengers had been dispatched and Roches was about to retire, but the Emir beckoned to him to remain. 'Why are you sad?' he said sharply; 'you ought to rejoice that God has given you the opportunity of proving your faith by fighting against the infidels.'

'Have I not often told you,' answered Roches, 'that I dreaded war because it will bring disaster to you and to your people? Cannot you understand that my heart is torn at the thought of having to fight against France, the country which bore me, which still shelters my father?'

'Those are blasphemous words!' answered Abd el Kader still more sternly. 'Have you forgotten that the day you embraced our holy religion you broke the bonds which tied you to the infidels? You speak like a Christian, Omar; remember you are a Moslem!'

Suddenly Roches lost all control of himself; the blood rushed to his head, his eyes flashed. He looked the Emir straight in the face and cried: 'I am *not* a Moslem!'

The Emir was thunderstruck. He turned pale, and his lips quivered; he raised his hands and his eyes to heaven. Then he

sprang to his feet, strode towards the door and opened it. Roches was certain that his last moment had come, and he commended himself to God; but Abd el Kader was only reassuring himself that the blasphemy had not been overheard. He returned and sat down opposite the unfortunate Frenchman.

'You must have misheard me, Omar,' he said more gently; 'you cannot have meant to utter those impious words which deserve death. Your mouth spoke, but not your heart. Drive out the devil that has taken hold of you, by reciting with me the *cheheda* of Islam: "There is no god but God, and Mahomet is his prophet".'

'No!' cried Roches, 'let us make an end of lies. I am not a Moslem! Take my life; it is yours.' He stood there, shattered, completely exhausted.

'*Laab-ed-Din, laab-ed-Din!*' (trifler with religion), repeated Abd el Kader with horror. Then, his eyes ablaze with anger, he stood up and said in a cold, lifeless voice: 'Go! I leave God to punish your soul; take your body from out of my sight. Go, and never repeat before a Moslem the blasphemy I have just heard, or I shall no longer be answerable for your life.'

Death, wrote Roches, would have been better than this all too well-merited denunciation. He bowed his head and withdrew. Somehow or other he managed to reach his house; then a violent fever seized him and he fainted.

He never again saw the hero whom he had worshipped, whom he had deceived by his pretended conversion. 'Yet there was one consolation,' he wrote, 'that of the knowledge of having served him with absolute loyalty and devotion; and by avowing my sin at the risk of my life, I felt that I had restored my own self-respect and gained respect in his eyes too.' A few days later he escaped to the French lines. 'I have always believed,' he said later, 'that Abd el Kader . . . feigned not to notice my escape. I owe him an immense debt of gratitude.'

Suspense continued throughout the first fortnight of November. In every mosque rang out the summons to prepare for the Holy War, where the Moslems would be 'as thorns in the eyes of the Christians'. A wave of wild enthusiasm swept through the country: 'We shall drive the French out of Algiers,' sang the Arabs round their camp-fires. 'Yea, we shall cross the sea in ships; we shall take Paris . . .'

Valée received, as he had expected, one or two threatening letters from Abd el Kader; but he was not seriously alarmed, and took no precautions. ‘While we were at peace,’ wrote the Emir, ‘and the limits between your country and mine were clearly defined, the King’s son set out with an army corps to go from Constantine to Algiers. This was done without giving me the slightest warning, without even writing me a line to explain away such a violation of territory. If you had informed me that he had an intention of visiting my country, I would either have accompanied him myself or have sent one of my *khalifas* to do so. You went even further; you proclaimed that all the country between Algiers and Constantine is no longer under my orders. The rupture comes from you; nevertheless, that you may not accuse me of treachery, I give you warning that I am about to recommence the war. Prepare yourself, then; warn all your travellers, your garrisons, your outposts; in a word, take all the precautions you consider necessary.’

Valée’s reply was carried by Ben Duran, who reached the Emir’s camp at Médéa on November 18. It was couched in soothing phrases, and concluded: ‘Have a little patience. I am waiting for orders from Paris. Everything will be arranged satisfactorily.’ The letter was read to the *khalifas* who were sitting in council there; and Ben Duran improved the occasion by adding his own explanation of the march and his own warning for the future—the Prince had made a ‘pleasure-trip’, that was all, and it would be madness to challenge the whole might of France on that account. But the vote was unanimously for war; on the following day the final decision was taken, and a letter dispatched by Ben Duran to Algiers.

Many years later the Emir confessed to General Daumas his feelings at this decisive moment in his people’s history. ‘I have often heard it said,’ he told him, ‘that public opinion forced me to go to war when I myself would have preferred to have waited several years to strengthen my position. That is untrue. I wanted war because I knew from the preparations which the French were making, that the peace we had made was not final. It was to my advantage to fight sooner rather than later. If I had waited to consolidate my position, I should have had an enemy richer and better equipped than I; I had nothing to gain by it. To those who maintain that I should have had a larger, better trained and better organized army, I answer that I should have needed not three or four years, but a hundred, to have raised our army to the level of

the French. I said to myself: let us start again now, with all our advantages and disadvantages; let us settle the matter at once; either the French will take the country, or we will make them sick of the whole business. If it had to begin again, I could do nothing else.'

Twenty-four hours later the storm burst. Hordes of Arabs and Kabyles poured down from the mountains into the Mitidja Plain. The farms and settlements round Algiers were burnt to the ground, the colonists murdered, or pursued to its very gates. The suburbs had to be evacuated; the Governor-General's palace at Mustapha was looted and destroyed; isolated posts and small detachments of French troops were overwhelmed. In the city itself, above which the black smoke hung ominously, it was rumoured that Abd el Kader was advancing with an army of thirty thousand men, preceded by five thousand sappers to undermine the walls.

Too late Valée realized his folly. He hastily evacuated most of the remaining outposts, and found himself obliged to make use of mobile columns (whose effectiveness he had always denied) to re-visit Blida and the few points he still held. In the Oran Province the Khalifa of Mascara, with vastly superior forces, attempted in vain to compel the little garrison of Mazagran to surrender; the Khalifa of Tlemcen besieged Misserghin; the Douairs and Smela ranged over the countryside. Never had Abd el Kader's position seemed more favourable.

But the Emir appreciated the enemy's potential strength; he knew that his own limited factories could not produce rifles and arms in sufficient quantities to maintain his advantage. He appealed in the most pressing terms to the Sultan of Morocco, who replied that he thanked God daily for 'the flowers of victory which were opening' but that he regretted his inability to give more than nominal support; he wrote to 'the Commander and Leader of the English army' denouncing French perfidy and offering to exchange livestock for war materials, but he received no answer. Meanwhile Valée was getting reinforcements from France, and by March, 1840, he had 58,000 men, 33,000 of whom were in the Province of Algiers.

To this new force the port of Cherchell fell without resistance, and at the end of April Valée marched against Médéa and Miliana. After an indecisive engagement at El-Affroun, the French advanced towards the Mouzaïa Pass which led to Médéa. Here Abd el

Kader had declared that the French army would find its grave. For months past he had been preparing the defences; trenches had been dug, and a redoubt with heavy but antiquated guns crowned the highest peak. The infantry was concealed among the rocks and bushes on the steep slopes commanding the pass.

The French advanced under cover of a light mist and, leaving the road, began to swarm up the precipitous cliffs. Abd el Kader had not anticipated this almost impossible manœuvre which, though costly to the French, eventually forced him to withdraw. A last stand was made at the redoubt; then the tricolor waved for the first time upon the highest summit of that range of the Atlas.

This was the battle of Ténia, Abd el Kader's last attempt to beat the French in a pitched fight. His *khalifas* were ordered 'never again to encounter the French in masses, but to confine themselves to harassing them, hanging on their flanks and rear, cutting off their communications, falling on their baggage and transports and, by feigned retreats, by ambuscades, by sudden and unexpected sallies, perplexing, wearying, and bewildering them'.

While the Emir was retreating on Miliana, Valée entered Médéa which he found almost deserted. In June, after several engagements in which French casualties were again heavy, Miliana fell. These two towns were held throughout the summer by heroic garrisons who, completely cut off from Algiers, were subjected to all the horrors of disease and famine. In October, when Changarnier ran the gauntlet of fire to revictual them, they were found to be in a pitiable plight; at Miliana, out of a garrison of twelve hundred, more than eight hundred were dead or in hospital.

Valée was still cheerful, and reported that 'the moment was approaching when the tribes would break away from the Emir'; but in their letters home the officers were far from sharing his optimism. They criticized his incompetence which had led to the isolation of these wretched garrisons and to the state of insecurity which prevailed up to the very walls of Algiers. At home the Government was no less dissatisfied; it was ten years since the fall of Algiers, and the French were virtually back where they had started. It was clear that the old European system of warfare was useless against Abd el Kader; a new system had to be evolved, and Valée was too old to do it.

In December, 1840, the Governor-General was recalled. We will leave Saint-Arnaud to write his epitaph: 'The fellow is stubborn

and headstrong, silent as the tomb, mulish as a Breton, capricious as a pretty woman, about as attractive as a prison door and as polite as a bear. Everything has to be *his* idea, to originate with *him*, to pass through *his* hands . . . He would burn his own shirt if he thought it knew his secrets.'

## CHAPTER XVI

### BUGEAUD

1841-1843

THE appointment of Bugeaud as Valée's successor came as something of a surprise, for the new Governor-General had long been a vigorous opponent of the permanent occupation of Algeria. But public opinion had been gradually changing, and Bugeaud (though he cared little for public opinion) had in fact moved with the times.

France, it may be remembered, had said repeatedly in 1830 that she had no intention of making a permanent occupation. Algiers would be captured; the insult would be avenged, and piracy suppressed for ever; then the European powers would meet over the council table. It is probable, I think, that this was her honest intention at the time; and for several years after the fall of Algiers there was often talk in the Chamber of abandoning the country. A commission sent out in November, 1833, visited Algiers and Blida and, on its return reported (with little enthusiasm) that it favoured a continued occupation—but purely for the sake of prestige. In the Chamber, as Abd el Kader well knew, there were plenty of outspoken attacks: 'Algeria is the maddest of enterprises' (M. de Sade, 1834); 'I would give the whole of Algeria for a hamlet (*bicoque*) on the Rhine' (M. Hippolyte Passy). But after 1834 there was less talk of a total withdrawal, though it was still generally agreed that the occupation should be as limited as possible. As late as 1838, Bugeaud was heard to declare: 'The Restoration prides itself on having given us Algeria; it only gave us Algiers, and it made us a sorry gift. I fear it will prove for the July Monarchy what Spain was for the Empire.'

Bugeaud arrived at Algiers at the end of December, 1840. Though there were some people who believed that France had at last found a Commander-in-Chief capable of making an end to this long drawn-out struggle, the new Governor had many enemies both at home and abroad. His improvident treaty, and his gibes about '*cette facheuse conquête*' could not easily be forgotten. The

French press, consistently hostile, had fanned the flames of his unpopularity. In the Chamber Bugeaud had bitterly attacked Valée's misguided policy of small fortified outposts; what, it was now asked, had he to offer instead?

It did not take his critics long to discover that Bugeaud had finished with half-measures, and that there was to be no more talk of 'limited occupation'. 'Alone the French flag shall fly upon the soil of Africa,' he announced to the people of Algiers; and to his troops: 'You have often defeated the Arabs, and you will defeat them again; but it is not enough to defeat them, you must subjugate them.' 'First we must fight,' he cried; 'we can consider the rights of the case later.' He proclaimed Martial Law, ordered the easy-going Algiers militia to see to home defence, and—to the fury of countless speculators—commandeered every horse and mule in the town, not excluding the Bishop's.

Three years earlier, at Oran, Bugeaud had formulated his policy for African warfare. All small posts, whose garrisons were 'decimated by disease, inaction and boredom', were to be done away with, and in their place a few strongly fortified towns were to be held as points of departure for mobile columns. The difficulty with the Arabs was not so much to beat them as to catch them. They had almost every advantage—they knew the country; they were innured to a climate which both in winter and in summer offered endless hardships to the invaders; and, more important still, they took the field without convoys, relying for food upon 'silos' or concealed granaries. Though the Treaty of Tafna had given Abd el Kader time to form a small regular army, 'this,' Bugeaud had told the Chamber, 'is not his strength. I will go further; it is even a source of weakness, because it is just this which will enable us to catch him one day. Do you know where his strength lies? It lies in hisclusiveness, in the vast distances to be traversed, in the heat of the African sun, in the lack of water, in the nomadism—if I may so express it—of the Arab. That is his real strength'. Time and again squadrons of Arab cavalry had appeared from nowhere, poured down upon a convoy or a column on the march, and vanished before any effective retaliation could be made. To counter the immense superiority which this mobility gave them, Bugeaud saw that his own columns must learn to do without the heavy convoys which hampered them on the march, and made so much of the mountainous country—Abd el Kader's favourite refuge—virtually inaccessible. 'No *impedimenta*' became his watchword.

Rigid uniforms were modified to suit the climate, the *képi* substituted for the shako, the soft collar for the stiff. A column setting out on a twenty-day expedition was now to carry only four days' rations, and to depend for the remainder upon cattle taken in *razzias* and upon finding hidden supplies of corn.<sup>1</sup>

Bugeaud now had 78,000 men at his disposal. Moreover, he had the confidence of the King, and the full support of the Government who allowed him complete freedom of action—advantages which none of his predecessors had enjoyed. For his subordinates he had a generation of officers who had won their laurels on African soil, men such as La Moricière, Changarnier, Bedeau, Cavaignac and Saint-Arnaud whose bravery and leadership were undisputed.

La Moricière, as we have already mentioned, had created the *Bureau Arabe* and had been the first to enter Constantine, in 1837, at the head of his *zouaves*. He was a small man, compactly built, with dark, piercing eyes and a black imperial; energetic, fearless, strong as a horse. Others in Africa had been brave, but La Moricière was far more than that; he understood the Arabs and spoke their language; he had always believed in the future of Algeria as a French colony; he had a flair for administration; he was a leader of men; he was just; in short, he had been the first Frenchman in Africa to show himself a worthy opponent of Abd el Kader. But unfortunately he could not tolerate Bugeaud's brusque manner and plain speech. 'He is brave, indefatigable, no doubt a man for entanglements; but a doctrinaire,' the latter said of him. 'He is always talking, cavilling; and he dislikes responsibility.' La Moricière soon had a strong following among those who preferred to put their faith in a young general rather than in an old man whose career was drawing to a close.

Changarnier had made his name during the first Constantine expedition, where his famous rearguard action probably saved the whole army from annihilation. But success had turned his head. He would be subordinate to no one, not even to Bugeaud whose faults he saw all too clearly but whose virtues passed him by. It was hardly surprising that a man who prided himself as putting on a new pair of kid gloves before going into action, should find Bugeaud boorish and ill-mannered. Criticized by the latter on

<sup>1</sup> Lines of soldiers, often several miles long, would advance over likely ground, prodding with their bayonets till they struck the stone slabs which sealed them. The corn was then ground with small Arab hand-mills. If the men did not live so well, 'they marched faster, and comforted themselves for their bad meals by beating the Arabs'.

one occasion for his lack of patience which was considered to have robbed the French of an important victory, he bridled and answered roughly: 'I have been fighting for years, and I think I can say that I know my job!' 'Sir!' replied Bugeaud, his temper rising, 'Marshal Saxe's mule took part in twenty campaigns, but it remained a mule.' Changarnier never forgave that rebuke; but he was a good soldier, and Bugeaud was glad enough to rely upon his fearlessness and presence of mind in moments of crisis. 'A disagreeable, bad-tempered fellow,' he used to say of him, 'but a fine soldier; the strongest and best of all my generals.'

Cavaignac, vain, touchy, temperamental, was a more isolated figure who remained aloof from the endless intrigues at headquarters where his Republican leanings made him suspect. He was given the most difficult and most thankless tasks, and executed them honestly and competently. Later, under the Second Republic, he was to rise to the rank of Governor-General.

'Bedeau,' said Bugeaud, 'is a man of duty and conscience, firm, unflinching under fire.' If he did not spare his men, he certainly never spared himself. He, too, avoided intrigue, and modestly withdrew from the limelight of publicity; Julien justly describes him as '*la plus belle figure morale de l'armée*'.

Lastly, we have Saint-Arnaud, the spendthrift aristocrat, the protégé of Bugeaud. If we seem to know him best of them all, it is because his brilliant letters are the most important literary documents of the Algerian war. He was clear-sighted and very intelligent, but cold and ruthless. There was something of the *condottiere* about him; fighting, with him, was a passion and inactivity a torture. To Bugeaud, who treated him almost as a son, his allegiance never wavered; and this inevitably brought him into conflict with Changarnier, whom he found 'a conceited ass'. He resented Changarnier's rapid promotion, and could not understand his own rather slow advancement.

These were the men who, under the dogged leadership of Bugeaud, were to play the principal roles in the second phase of the African War; against them was pitted the brilliant, mercurial genius of Abd el Kader, who rose to his full stature as the overwhelming resources of a great European Power were gradually marshalled against him.

With the coming of spring the French armies took the field. Huge quantities of supplies were poured into Médéa and Miliana,

in spite of the energetic attacks of the Arabs under Abd el Kader himself. In May the Commander-in-Chief left for Mostaganem where La Moricière's men were restlessly awaiting the order to march. First Tagdempt fell. From the hills above the town, helpless to offer serious resistance, the Emir watched the systematic destruction of all that remained of the capital he had so laboriously built. A few days later, as the French entered Mascara, Abd el Kader wandered among the ruins of Tagdempt. An Englishman, Colonel Scott, who was with him, wrote bitterly: 'Should Louis-Philippe reward his brave troops with a medal for this expedition, I would recommend its being a medal bearing on the one side "Tegedempt, 25 of May", and on the other a dog in the last agonies, suspended from the gate of a castle; which would be most appropriate, as, not finding in the town bipeds on whom to vent their desire of slaughter (one man excepted, who from old age was unable to make his escape, and was inhumanly butchered), they put to death all the unfortunate dogs to be found; I counted fifty dead carcasses on the field, near the town, and in the streets.'

Meanwhile in the Province of Algiers General Baraguey d'Hilliers had taken Boghar and Taza and razed them to the ground. One stone alone was saved from the ruins that had once been Taza; it had stood over the entrance to the fort, and bore an inscription stating that the town had been built by Abd el Kader. The flowery text concluded: 'God is my witness that this work is mine, and that posterity will remember it. All who draw near to me, who come to our happy lands truly seeking peace and quiet, shall find after me and for all eternity the example of my services and benefactions.'

For two reasons Abd el Kader had been forced to allow his strongholds to fall into French hands without a fight. First, his regular army was more than occupied in keeping up the morale of war-weary tribes who were prepared upon the smallest pretext to go over to the enemy; and second, he saw more than ever before that his strength now lay in his mobility. Against the vastly superior forces at Bugeaud's command, his only hope was to allow the enemy to advance and then to harass his communications. In a letter addressed to Bugeaud by a group of Arab sheikhs this policy is clearly stated:

'What is this spirit that impels France, who calls herself such a powerful and strong nation, to come and make war upon us? Has she not territory enough? What loss will the land she takes

be to us in comparison with what is left us? She will march forward, and we shall retire; but she will be compelled to retire, and we shall return.

'And you, Governor of Algiers, what harm can you do us? In fighting you lose as many men as we do. Sickness decimates your army every year. What compensation can you offer your King, your country, for your enormous losses in men and money? A little land, and the stones of Mascara! You burn, you waste our harvests, you cut our barley and wheat and rob our silos. But what is the plain of Eghris—and you have not wasted a twentieth part of it—when we have the harvest left in (here follow the names of thirty places), and, besides that, the harvest of Morocco itself? The mischief you think you have done us is like a cup of water drawn from the sea . . . We shall fight when we think fit: you know we are no cowards. For us to meet all the forces you drag along with you would be madness; but we shall weary them, harass them, and destroy them piecemeal; our climate will do the rest. Send man against man, ten against ten, a hundred against a hundred, a thousand against a thousand, and you will see whether we recoil. Do you see the wave rise when a bird brushes it with its wing? This is the image of your passing over Africa.'

The French found Mascara little damaged, and they set about converting the town into one of the strong-points upon which freely-moving columns were to be based. It was June, and the harvest ripe; instead of laying waste the fields, Bugeaud preferred to reap them and thus help to provision the town. The soldiers worked 'with the sword in one hand and the reaping-hook in the other'; and Bugeaud himself, who loved the land almost as well as he loved the army, was sure to put in an appearance and exchange a little kindly if rather ponderous banter with his men. 'If he saw a threshing-floor where the work was slack,' one of his staff tells of him, 'he would come up and call out: "I am sure that all of you here are learned men. What is your profession?" he asked one of the threshers. "I am a tailor, General." "There are too many people to make the ugly, scanty clothes that are fashionable nowadays; thresh away, *mon enfant*, it will be much more use to the country, and to you." "And what are you?" "I, General, am a scholar." "Scholar of nothing, of course; pick up the flail, my friend. And you?" And thus he would review all the idlers, supported in his lesson by the laughter of the workers. "Come along, let us see. Start threshing. Oh! that's not the way;



MARSHAL BUGEAUD

From a painting by Lativière in the Versailles Museum

(Photo M. N. Versailles)



you don't know how to do it at all. Give me a flail . . . ."; and 'le père Bugeaud' would show them that for all his fifty-seven years he could handle it better than any of them.

Autumn brought the Arabs no respite. In October the *guetna* of Mahi ed Din, Abd el Kader's home and the centre of his religious observances, was taken and destroyed; and a few days later the mountain stronghold of Saïda, south of Mascara, suffered the same fate. In the latter, wrote Montagnac, the Emir had built 'a palace of extraordinary beauty in the Arab style, decorated with perfectly formed plaster mouldings, fine marble bas-reliefs, pretty galleries supported by several rows of columns, doors and windows with pointed arches, floors of white marble, etc. etc.—a real *bonbonnière*'. Everything was smashed to pieces. 'Always destruction!' he adds; 'it is tragic when one considers with what slender resources that most remarkable man Abd el Kader erected such buildings.'

In November Bugeaud was back in Algiers, occupied with a project which had long been in his mind—that of encouraging colonists. To eight hundred soldiers who had earned their discharge he now offered land in the new colony; only sixty accepted. At what he called 'a feast of husbandry', sixty ploughs were assembled on the Mitidja plain, where the Governor-General himself marked the first furrow to show, as the official report says, 'that it was not his first attempt'.

The year 1841 marked the turning-point in the war. Abd el Kader's fortresses were falling one by one, his influence was waning. In his despair he appealed to England for help; he was even reduced to writing in abject terms to his old enemy the Sultan of Turkey, saying that 'the country was his, and his authority must be upheld'; but no help came. Only from Morocco could he still hope for anything more than benign neutrality.

But though the Emir's towns fell, his trusty *khalifas* continued to take the field with powerful squadrons of cavalry. La Moricière might occupy Mascara, but its *khalifa*, Mustapha ben Thami, preyed around the city, urging the tribes to revolt and threatening the supply routes. Soon, however, the area between Oran, Mascara and the sea was cleared of Arab influence. At the end of January (1842) Tlemcen fell, and its *khalifa*, Bou Hamidi, narrowly escaped capture at the fortress of Sebdou when it was taken a fortnight later. Abd el Kader, watching and waiting in the Trara mountains near the Moroccan frontier, was forced to give up Nédroma in March and seek refuge in Morocco. But he was

soon across the frontier again, hammering unsuccessfully at the French in Nédroma, doing everything in his power to keep his communications with Morocco open. In May three French columns, under Bugeaud, Changarnier and La Moricière, swept through the valley of the Chélib and the foothills of the Ourensenis, while June saw the fall of the southern fortress of Goudjilah.

Goudjilah, perched upon an almost inaccessible crag of rock, had been used by Abd el Kader since the loss of Tagdempt as a storehouse for arms and provisions. He had believed it to be impregnable, and in Valée's day it would no doubt have been so. Old Mustapha ben Ismaël, who accompanied La Moricière and the French column which stormed it, could not restrain his joy. From the summit of the rock, gazing now towards the blue peaks to northwards, now to the burning southern plains, he cried: 'Son of Mahi ed Din ! this country can never be destined to belong to you, a *marabout*, son of a *zaouïa*. . . . I have helped the French with all my might . . . because I am a soldier and could only obey soldiers. I have led them to the gateway of the Sahara; now I can die in peace. Full justice will soon be done to your absurd ambitions.'

Abd el Kader's energy, skill and daring during those anxious months were unparalleled, and the French, for all their vaunted mobility, could never catch up with their elusive enemy. Churchill gives a graphic picture of this hopeless quest:

'La Moricière, zealously acting up to the instructions given him to pursue and overtake the Emir, was always fancying himself on the traces of his object. Suddenly he heard that Abd el Kader was before Mascara. When he had contrived to arrive by forced marches at that place, he was told that Abd el Kader had passed by the rear of his column, and was making a *razzia* on the Bordgia tribes. Again came the pursuit, and again Abd el Kader, by a bold and rapid manœuvre, leaving his bewildered foes behind him, dashed across the Chélib, placed himself between Bugeaud and the sea, recovered his ascendancy over the tribes who had deserted him in that direction, made another sweeping *razzia* to the south of Miliana, and then, rushing back to the Sahara, showed himself there in full force, just as the French had returned, in despair of finding him, to their cantonments. By ever-recurring evolutions of this nature, slipping between the enemy's columns, flitting in their front, hovering on their flank, falling on their rear, never at fault, never discouraged, sometimes in the mountains, sometimes in the plains, disconcerting and rendering abortive the most

scientific military combinations, Abd el Kader amply compensated for the disparity of his means, and counterbalanced the manifold disadvantages under which he laboured.'

Yet in spite of everything Abd el Kader could do, day by day his empire dwindled and his influence weakened. In Tlemcen, Mascara, Miliana and Médéa, 'French' *khalifas* had been installed, while his own representatives roamed the countryside. The autumn brought him no better fortune; the '*jeu de barres*' (prisoners' base), as the French called it, continued relentlessly. Whoever might win in this terrible struggle, the wretched tribesmen were the invariable losers, now punished by Bugeaud for supporting Abd el Kader, now pillaged by the Emir for having submitted to the French. The year 1842 closed with a strong attack by converging columns of French troops upon the Ouarensenis. This great range of mountains to the south of the river Chélik had always been the most dangerous and inaccessible of Abd el Kader's retreats. From the ilex and cedar forests which cloaked the foothills, he could strike without warning at a quarter of all Algeria. In a seven weeks' campaign Bugeaud, La Moricière and Changarnier pursued the tribes who inhabited it, to the very foot of the precipices of Mount Cheuba. Here, on December 16, Si Mohammed bel Hadj, *kaïd* of the Beni-Ourag, surrendered. 'The word of a Beni-Ourag is proverbial,' he said; 'if you are merciful, I am yours for ever. I will tell Abd el Kader, "I have lost six sons for you in battle; the tribe has sacrificed everything for you; we can do no more for you since you cannot protect us".' Bugeaud treated the tribesmen generously; there was more to be gained by trusting them than by taking prisoners where food was short and the country inhospitable.

As a whole, however, the campaigns of 1841 and 1842 were brutal and merciless. It was no longer a war of disciplined armies which, whilst fighting one another, spared the civil population. Every Arab, every Kabyle was treated as a belligerent; his cattle and his crops, his house and his tent, his wife and his child, were fair game for the invading armies. No other method of warfare would have been successful; but it was not glorious, and it had the worst possible effect on most of the French troops who took part in it. Saint-Arnaud refers again and again to this systematic and ruthless destruction, to incidents often trivial enough singly but terrible in their cumulative effect:

'We are among the mountains between Miliana and Cherchell.

We have fired few shots, but we are burning all the *douars*, all the villages, all the huts. The enemy flees before us, taking his flocks with him' (April 5, 1842). 'The Beni Manacer's country is superb . . . We have burnt everything, destroyed everything. Oh! this war, this war! How many women and children, seeking refuge in the Atlas snows, have died there of cold and misery . . . Our casualties were five killed and forty wounded' (April 7, 1842). 'We lay waste, we burn, we plunder, we destroy the crops and the trees. As for engagements, few or none; just a hundred or two wretched Arabs who fire on the rearguard and wound a few men' (June 5, 1842). 'When I last wrote I was among the Brazes. I laid waste and burnt everything. Now I am among the Sindgads. The same thing on a grand scale; it's a real public granary . . . A few tribesmen brought in their horses as tokens of submission. I refused because I wanted a general submission, and began burning once more' (October 1, 1842). 'Here I am with my little army, burning the *douars* and huts of the insurgents, raiding their silos and sending to Miliana all the corn and barley that I draw from them . . . A few shots have been fired. To-day I am making a halt to continue emptying silos and burning villages and huts. I shall leave them no peace till they submit' (October 5, 1842). 'I shall not leave a single tree standing in their orchards, not a head on the shoulders of these wretched Arabs . . . Those are the orders that I have received from General Changarnier, and they will be punctually executed. I shall burn everything, kill every one . . .' (January 18, 1843). 'On the 4th I reached Haimda. I burned everything in my path and destroyed the pretty village, but it was impossible to proceed further . . . When day dawned we saw that two foot of snow had fallen. No sign of a track, nothing; just snow, and more snow. I started off, and we had hardly made a quarter of a mile when we came upon a horrible sight . . . heaps of bodies huddled together, frozen to death during the night. They were the Beni-Naâseur whose villages and huts I had burnt, whom I had driven before me . . .' (February 8, 1843).

That is the picture of destruction wrought by the French; the reverse of the picture is hardly less terrible. In July, 1841, Saint-Arnaud was commanding the rearguard in a march from Mostaganem to Mascara; it was the hottest time of the year, and the men were completely exhausted. Arabs were hovering about the rearguard and, though rifle-fire drove them back, they continued

to follow at a distance, confident that their prey could not escape them. ‘Not for a general’s epaulettes would I live those next ten hours again,’ wrote Saint-Arnaud. ‘Hardly had the firing ceased when stragglers began to drop out of the ranks, by scores, by hundreds, from every corps and every regiment. The wretched Light Infantry Battalion which was having its first taste of African warfare was in complete chaos. It formed the van, and was therefore nearly two leagues ahead of me; but I picked up its men in the rearguard. I saw the most hideous scenes of weakness and demoralization. I saw soldiers throw away their arms and equipment and lie down to await death—certain and dishonourable death. Forced to their feet, they stumbled on for a hundred yards, only to fall again, overcome by the heat, worn out, weakened by fever and dysentery. In order to try and avoid me they threw themselves down away from the track, in the thickets, among the ravines. I followed them and took their rifles and their packs; I made my *zouaves* drag them along . . . Many begged me to kill them so that they should not die at the hands of the Arabs. I saw some of them clasp the barrels of their rifles in a voluptuous frenzy as they tried to place them in their mouths; never have I found suicide easier to understand . . . That day, a day I shall never forget, I understood the Macta, Tafna, all the disasters of Africa.’

In the spring of 1843 Ténès, Abd el Kader’s last port, fell to the French who from now on were able to make use of the valuable overland route between Algiers and Oran. The town of Orléansville, constructed by Bugeaud on the site of the Roman Castellum Ungibatum and named in honour of the young prince who a few months before had met his death in a carriage accident in Paris, guarded the road from the south. With every month that passed, the Emir saw the net closing round him. No fortress was now safe from attack. When, one after another, they fell into the hands of the Christians, he began to form the vast agglomeration of tents, the huge moving capital, known as the *smala*.

‘My *smala*,’ the Emir said later to General Daumas, ‘included every kind of craftsman necessary for our organization—armourers, tailors, saddlers and the like. Complete order prevailed. *Kadis* administered justice, exactly as they did in the towns. Markets were held. There was no stealing, no immorality. Hospitality was offered, as in the past. When we made a halt, the education of our children went on; the times of prayer were observed, and announced by the *muezzins*. Each family carried provisions

according to its transport facilities, the rich for two or three months, the poor for at least a fortnight. We often went with our camels and pack animals to revictual in the Tell. Arabs of your tribes, especially those on the borders of the Sahara, visited our markets and kept us supplied.'

In the *smala*, the *douars* were arranged in a series of concentric circles; every one knew beforehand the place he should occupy. In the centre came the Emir's *douar*, which consisted of more than thirty tents. Here were lodged his mother, Lella Zohra, his wives, his eldest daughter, his four-year-old son and his two smaller children. The faithful Ben Kada took charge of it, and himself prepared the food for the Emir and his family. Here, too, were kept the chests containing the national treasure. Within the first enclosure camped Ben Thami, Miloud ben Arach or any other important chiefs who happened to be present, as well as three or four hundred of the regular infantry. In the outer part of the camp were women and children of all the tribes; their presence was a useful guarantee of the loyalty of their husbands and brothers in the army. When encamped, the *smala* covered an enormous area. 'If an Arab happened to lose his family,' said Abd el Kader, 'it would sometimes take him two days to find it again; and if a herd of gazelle rose before it, the entire herd was killed, without a shot being fired, by the use of sticks alone. Where we camped we dried up the brooks, the wells and the pools, so that I had to have special police to prevent water being wasted or polluted by animals. In spite of all these precautions, many people died of thirst.'

To begin with, the *smala* had been able to wander leisurely from well to well, undisturbed by fear of surprise attacks; but as the French advanced ever further towards the south, marches and counter-marches became increasingly frequent, and sometimes had to be made at very short notice. For the old and the sick, for pregnant women and small children, the strain was often too great to bear, and every bivouac was marked by its little cemetery of hastily dug graves. To keep up morale under these trying conditions, says Roches in an article upon the *smala* which he wrote at Bugeaud's request, 'the Emir and his lieutenants resorted as usual to the spreading of false rumours. When they saw discouragement becoming widespread, they hastened to put it about that France had gone to war with England and was withdrawing most of her troops; that Abd er Rahman had hurled his Moorish hordes against us, and was advancing at the head of a

great army; that Ben Allal had won a sensational victory over the Christians; that Mustapha ben Ismaël had deserted our cause; or that, tired of spending huge sums with nothing to show for them, we were begging for peace, while, to show that we were in earnest, Bugeaud had been dismissed.'

The *smala* had spent the winter of 1842 to 1843 in the neighbourhood of Goudjilah; but when spring came, Abd el Kader decided—as the French guessed that he would—to move it further southwards. La Moricière at the newly constructed French fortress of Tiaret, and the duc d'Aumale at Boghar, were preparing to draw the net. The Emir himself was not with the *smala*, which he had left under the command of Kaddour ben Abd el Baki, Khalifa of the western Sahara. It consisted at this time of some sixty or seventy thousand persons, and included about a dozen whole tribes, together with sections of others. Among the latter were all those tribes who had submitted to the French. 'The men from them were *marabouts*, *talebs* and chiefs who clung to their religious convictions and refused to live under your rule,' said Abd el Kader. 'They were very useful to me, because all of them were influential men in their own part of the country, who had been able to keep in touch with their tribes; they kept me exactly informed of all your movements.'

In May the *smala* was heading southwards for the Djebel Amour. Ben Allal and Ben Thami were further north, in the Ouarensenis, while the Emir kept watch near Tagdempt with his cavalry; he had come to the conclusion that La Moricière was his chief danger, and therefore neglected to keep an eye on the duc d'Aumale. On the 10th of that month the young prince slipped out of Boghar with six hundred cavalry under the command of Yusuf, thirteen hundred infantry, and twenty days' provisions carried on mules and camels. Ahmar ben Ferrath, *Aghla* of the Ouled Aïad, and a handful of his tribesmen went with them as scouts, and there was also the usual collection of hangers-on—irregulars who attached themselves to any expedition that promised a hope of plunder.

The column made first for Goudjilah, took the fortress by surprise, and continued on its way southwards. The Emir, pre-occupied with La Moricière, believed that the Prince had returned to Boghar and did not give him another thought. Information as to the whereabouts of the *smala*—some of it correct, some of it misleading—made the French alter their course more than once. On the 15 they left Ain-el-Guelty and headed towards the well

of Taguin, a distance of forty miles entirely without water. The Prince and most of the cavalry rode on ahead, leaving the infantry to follow. The heat was stifling, and a strong *siracco* blew. At eleven o'clock the next morning Ahmar ben Ferrath was reconnoitring with his scouts when he noticed a cloud of dust rising from the valley where Taguin lay. He rode on as far as the crest of the hill which overlooked the valley, dismounted, and cautiously peered over—below, as far as the eye could see, lay the *smala*.

Yusuf, half-incredulous of Ahmar's story, was soon on the spot to judge for himself. 'A thrilling spectacle lay at our feet,' wrote Fleury, a French officer who accompanied him. 'The danger had not in any way been exaggerated. The *smala* had, in fact, just reached the stream and was pitching camp. Women, children, guards, muleteers, cattle were all in confusion, and we could hear the shouts and lowing of this mixed multitude. With field glasses we could see the arms of the Emir's Regulars who were superintending the arrangement of the *douars*. A few white tents had just been set up to shelter the women of Abd el Kader or his great chiefs. Everything was buzzing like a hive. Thousands of camels and mules were waiting with their burdens still on their backs, while those which had been unloaded were straggling along the green banks of the little river. There were also innumerable flocks of sheep and goats which increased the incredible chaos. All these thirsty creatures must, it seemed, dry up the precious thread of water that wound its way through the turmoil.'

A council was held at once. There was not a moment to lose, for the nearest *douars* were barely half a mile away, and at any instant the alarm might be given. Ahmar contended that it would be madness to attack with a mere handful of cavalry. But the infantry was several hours march behind; if the cavalry were to wait for them to come up, all the advantages of a surprise attack would probably be lost. Yusuf, though he appreciated the risk, was for attacking at once. 'I am entirely of your opinion,' said the Prince. His two aides-de-camp, responsible for his safety, implored him to wait. D'Aumale was just twenty-one, and did not know what fear meant. 'Gentlemen,' he answered, 'we will go forward! My ancestors never fell back; I will not set the example.' Coolly he began to give the final orders for the attack. Placing Yusuf with his spahis on the left, he himself joined Colonel Morris and the *Chasseurs d'Afrique* on the right, and the little band moved off at a trot up the hill-side.

At the sudden sight of the gigantic concourse in the valley below, the spahis hesitated; what could five or six hundred hope to achieve against sixty or seventy thousand Arabs, some five thousand of whom were armed? But when the Prince and Morris charged at the head of the *chasseurs*, Yusuf's men soon followed their example.

For a moment the Arabs in the *smala* were deceived. They had complete confidence in Abd el Kader's ability to protect them, and when the red *burnouses* of the spahis appeared on the brow of the hill they imagined that the Emir was returning after a victory against the Christians. But as the first shots rang out, the women's ululations of joy gave way to cries of fear and shouts of '*Er Roumi! Er Roumi!*' (the Christians! the Christians!).

Who can hope to describe the nameless terrors, the thousand little tragedies, the thousand unnoticed acts of heroism or of cowardice which went to make up that next fearful hour? Not even Horace Vernet's seventy-foot canvas at Versailles can do more than hint at the horror of the scene as, in the scorching heat of the noonday sun, the French cavalry bore down upon the panic-stricken rabble. The Emir's Regulars had barely time to seize their rifles before the Christians fell upon them; there was no question of making an organized defence, and hundreds of separate encounters took place all over the field. Some of the Arabs tried to load their women and their valuables upon camels; others thought only of their own safety as they galloped away up the valley. Tents were overturned, women and children trampled underfoot as the cavalry swept through the camp. Herds broke loose and stampeded among the shrieking women as they fled blindly from the battle-field.

Yusuf and his spahis had reached the Emir's *douar*, but neither Abd el Kader nor any of his most important chiefs were in the *smala* except Miloud ben Arach; 'and when it comes to fighting,' Abd el Kader once scornfully said of him, 'his wife is more of a man than he is'. For a few minutes the spahis met with stiff resistance from isolated groups of Arab Regulars, but the Emir's tent and his treasure were soon in French hands. Suddenly an old woman threw herself on her knees, clutched at Yusuf's stirrups and begged for mercy. He did not know that she was Lalla Zohra, the Emir's mother; a moment later she was able to make her escape, together with her daughter-in-law, under the escort of two brave Arab horsemen.

In little more than an hour it was all over, and the Prince rallied his squadrons. Several thousand Arabs, mostly women and children, were begging for mercy, while the remainder fled in every direction across the plain. The booty taken was enormous, though we may wonder how many of the French soldiers were able to 'bale out dollars and doubleoons in their shakos and fill their haversacks with pearls and diamonds'. But millions of francs worth of coins and jewellery were taken, precious manuscripts, a vast amount of livestock of all kinds, and the Emir's tent with his arms, standards, and the robe of investiture sent him by the Sultan of Morocco. Among the three thousand prisoners were a number of the Emir's relations, the family of Sidi Embarek, the daughter of Ben Arach, and the old *mardabout* Sidi Laradj who eleven years earlier had helped to proclaim Abd el Kader Emir upon the plains of Eghris. French casualties were nine killed and twelve wounded.

On May 18, after destroying all the equipment which could not be carried back, the French set out for Mascara which, to their surprise, they reached without incident. Actually the Emir did not hear of the disaster until the day after their arrival there. At first he was overwhelmed. For some hours he remained in his tent in prayer and meditation; then he came out and addressed his people: 'Praise be to God!' he cried; 'all these things which once I so much valued, only hampered my movements and turned me aside from the right path. Now I shall be free to fight the infidels. Why should we mourn those we loved and have lost? Are they not in paradise?' 'The French have made a *razzia* on my *smala*', he wrote to his *khalifas*, 'but do not let us be discouraged. From now on we shall be lighter and better disposed for war.' But for all his resignation and assumed composure he felt the blow deeply. 'If I had been there,' he told General Daumas later, 'we would have fought for our wives and our children, and you would have seen a great day. But God decreed otherwise. I did not hear of the disaster till three days afterwards; then it was too late.'

But the men of the *smala* had no doubt about the humiliation they had suffered. 'When we saw how few the victors were,' said one of those who were taken prisoner, 'we blushed for shame. If every man in the *smala* had fought, had it only been with a stick, the conquerors would have been the conquered. But God's will must be done.'

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MOORISH WAR

ON the evening of November 5, 1839, Léon Roches, fugitive from the camp of Abd el Kader, had ridden in to the French outpost of Le Figuier near Oran. The sight of French uniforms, the almost forgotten sound of bugles, suddenly brought home to him a flood of memories; once more he was among his own countrymen, once more he was free.

He was soon to be disillusioned. The commanding officer listened incredulously to his story: 'I've heard tales like that before,' he said, and gave orders for Roches to be taken under guard to Oran. The guard, however, was more sympathetic; as soon as the camp was hidden from sight it converted itself into an escort to the port where Daumas, French agent from Mascara, was ready to vouch for Roches's loyalty and to see that he was set free.<sup>1</sup> The young man's first concern was to arrange with the *Kadi* of Oran for a divorce. The document was then addressed to Abd el Kader, together with a letter in which he explained the reasons for his desertion. A week later he left for Algiers.

The joy of seeing his father again was marred by the discovery that he had become bankrupt. The farm had been sold up; but there were still considerable debts outstanding, and he counted upon Léon to settle with his creditors. When the Governor-General offered the young man the post of third class military interpreter he hesitated; the pay was poor, and the work would involve betraying the secrets he had learned by false pretences from the Emir. 'Not content with having deceived him about my religion, had I now to go so far as to fight against him?' But a fixed salary, small though it was, was a tempting bait; and the Bishop of Algiers, to whom he appealed for advice, produced specious arguments to justify his acceptance. In the end he overcame his scruples.

Roches's first task was to draw up a memorandum dealing with Abd el Kader and his relations with the various tribes and their

<sup>1</sup> See page 125.

chiefs. The value of this information was soon appreciated, and he was ordered to make a personal report to the War Ministry. In January (1840), for the first time in his life, he found himself in Paris. 'For two months I was the rage. All the great salons vied with one another to display Abd el Kader's private secretary. Endless legends were invented about me.' He was presented to the duc d'Orléans, and to Thiers with whom he had a number of interviews. Roches naïvely handed to the Prime Minister the memorandum upon which he had spent so much time and labour. Thiers not only failed to return it, but sent copies of it to Algiers where extracts were published under other names.

Roches reaped one tangible reward, however, from moving in high places—he was promoted to the grade of first class interpreter. He received orders to join the staff of the duc d'Orléans who were embarking at Toulon. But Roches had enemies in Algiers who had been poisoning the mind of the Governor-General against him in his absence. The 'renegade', Valée told the Prince, could not be trusted in a position of such importance; and the latter, with some reluctance, agreed to Roches being transferred to the staff of General Shramm.

During the campaigns of 1840 Roches saw plenty of fighting; but he 'was never called upon to provide the smallest piece of information'. At long last Valée realized that he had misjudged him: 'I was unfair to you,' he said as he sailed for France; 'I came to know you too late. If I can be of any use to you, you can count on me.' But Valée's day was over.

In the memorandum which he had given to Thiers, Roches had strongly criticized the Tafna Treaty; he had no reason, therefore, to expect any improvement in his position from Valée's successor. But Bugeaud greeted him cordially, and appointed him to his staff; soon there was complete confidence between the two men, and the new Governor-General showed that he was neither too short-sighted nor too proud to make use of Roches's valuable knowledge of Arab affairs.

But the army as a whole, and the civilian population of Algiers, still viewed the young Frenchman with a suspicion which, though easily comprehensible, began to make his life a burden. The fits of depression which this mistrust induced were aggravated by domestic worries. Roches, while in Paris, had become engaged to a young woman whose chief charm lay in a substantial bank balance which he hoped would solve all his financial difficulties.

In July (1841) he received formal intimation that the engagement was at an end; no reason was given. 'Despair seized hold of me,' he wrote. 'I sought nothing but a means of escape from Algiers and an end to an existence which promised a future even blacker than the present. Not that I thought of suicide; I wanted to die, but to die without leaving that indelible stain upon my memory.' The execution of some dangerous mission seemed the solution of his problem.

Just such a mission now presented itself. Roches had become convinced that a large number of tribes were only held back from submitting to the French because they believed that the Koran threatened eternal damnation to all Moslems who agreed to live under Christian rule. Abd el Kader had read this meaning into the verses in question; but certain commentators maintained that, when further resistance was hopeless, Moslems might submit, provided that their conquerors allowed them to continue their religious observances. Tedjini, the sworn enemy of Abd el Kader, took this view, and so did a number of other influential Arabs. But to give authority to this interpretation, Roches knew that it would be necessary to obtain a *fetwa* (religious decision) from the *ulemas* of one of the great cities of Islam. He proposed, in the first case, to visit Tedjini and discuss the scheme with him. Bugeaud reluctantly agreed to his making the hazardous journey; but a messenger sent to Tedjini brought back the reply that Roches would only be going to certain death. He suggested instead that suitable chiefs should be secretly invited to assemble at Kairouan in Tunisia, the third of the sacred cities of Islam.

In August, 1841, the delegates attended the Council of *ulemas* at Kairouan. Gold *sultans*, liberally provided by Bugeaud and slipped unostentatiously into the palms of the learned councillors, smoothed the way to a favourable interpretation of the disputed text. 'I do not mean that I bought their consciences,' wrote Roches, 'but I moderated their fanaticism.'

The consent of the *ulemas* of Kairouan was valuable, but Roches knew that the *fetwa* would carry a tenfold greater importance if it were approved by the *ulemas* of the famous universities of the East. With Bugeaud's permission he now set sail for Egypt, still accompanied by the faithful Isidore. In Cairo he was presented to the viceroy, Mehemet Ali, whose 'leonine aspect, the symbol of a will founded upon material power' was in striking contrast, he observed, to the Emir's 'ascetic face which glowed with the

faith that was the mainspring of his actions and the foundation of his strength'. They discussed the Algerian war, and Mehemet Ali expressed astonishment at the prolonged resistance of the Arabs against the ordered and well-equipped armies of France. He remembered his own swift and bloody pacification of Egypt, and asserted that his armies would have made short work of Abd el Kader and his ill-disciplined hordes. Roches ventured to point out the difference between the inaccessible mountains of Algeria and the defenceless plains of Egypt, between the fearless Kabyles or elusive Arabs and the sedentary, placid inhabitants of the Nile valley. The courtiers looked anxiously at one another; the viceroy was not in the habit of being corrected. But except for 'an occasional knitting of his terrible brows' (Roches remembered the murdered Mamelukes, and understood the mood in which the massacre had been ordered), Mehemet Ali did not seem ill-pleased with his frankness.

The *ulemas* of Cairo, influenced probably by Mehemet Ali and certainly by French gold, gave their approval to the *fetwa*.<sup>1</sup> But Roches was not yet satisfied; the supreme sanction of the *ulemas* of Damascus, Medina and Baghdad who were assembling at Mecca for the pilgrimage, would crown his work. We cannot follow him on his adventurous journey through Arabia, the full account of which may be read in the second volume of his autobiography. After successfully accomplishing his mission, doubts and depression once more overwhelmed him. He swore never to return to Algeria. Easter, 1842, saw him in Rome, where he once more found peace of mind in the faith of his forefathers. He considered entering the Society of the Jesuits, and was received in audience by Pope Gregory XVI. But Fate still drew him to Algeria; Bugeaud refused to accept his resignation, and the Pope, at a final audience, persuaded the young man that his duty lay in Africa. On June 3, 1842, Roches once more set foot in Algiers.

Tedjini's agents lost no time in proclaiming the *fetwa* throughout

<sup>1</sup> The *fetwa*, which was of great length, concluded with the following passage (abbreviated by Roches): 'When a Moslem people, whose country has been invaded by infidels, has fought them so long as there seemed any hope of ejecting them; when it is certain that to prolong the war can only bring misery, ruin and death to the Moslems, without there being the least chance of their gaining victory over the infidels; then this people, while continuing to hope that by God's grace they may throw off the yoke, may agree to live under their rule, with the express proviso that they shall be allowed freedom to practise their religion, and that their wives and daughters shall be respected.'

Algeria and in collecting any information which might be of help to the French. The main obstacle still in the way of submission, Roches learned, was the fear felt by the tribesmen that the French would once again leave them in the lurch. With Bugeaud's approval he now let it be known that never again would the French conclude a treaty with the Emir. Further, Roches wrote on behalf of the Governor-General to inform Abd el Kader of this decision, and to announce the *fetwa* which from now on, he asserted, would lay at the Emir's door all responsibility for the continued sufferings of the Arab people. The letter concluded with a transcription of Bugeaud's actual words: 'Tell Abd el Kader that I am authorized by the King of France to give him the *aman* the day that he lays down his arms; God's *aman* for himself, for his family, and for all his countrymen who wish to go with him. Our ships will carry him to one of the ports of the Sultan of Constantinople, where the government will put annually at his disposal a sum sufficient to assure him an existence worthy of his former rank.'

The letter remained unanswered; the promise too, as we shall see later, was not kept.

Abd el Kader, for all his assumed indifference, felt the loss of his *smala* deeply. More than once in the past, when the future had seemed black and hopeless, he had considered the possibility of withdrawing with it to the East: 'I often thought of putting myself at the head of that vast population and leading it overland to Mecca,' he said later. 'On our journey we should have lived on good terms with those who received us well, and we should have forced our way past those who showed themselves hostile to us. My chiefs and *talebs* wished it also . . . There is no doubt that we should have come through; what Arabs could have resisted the old warriors who fought you so long, you whose reputation for fighting is well known all the world over? It would have been a fine thing, a fine example to the whole world, to have reinstated in the Cradle of Islam the Arabs who eight centuries before had left it to conquer Africa, and who refused to remain under Christian rule. But God did not will it!' Now it was too late. Abd el Kader's *smala* was scattered; his pride was humbled. He had no choice but to fight the losing battle to the end.

The bitterness of his humiliation was mitigated by news of the death of his most relentless enemy, Mustapha ben Ismaël.

Mustapha and his cavalry, returning with the booty they had taken from the fleeing *smala*, had been surprised by a handful of Arab horsemen in a wooded valley not far from Oran. His men were only concerned with securing their loot; 'fear entered their lion hearts by the door of avarice', and they began to make off. As the eighty-year-old warrior vainly tried to rally them, a bullet struck him and he fell dead. The double traitors left his body where it lay; it was identified by the hand wound which he had received at the battle of Sikkak. Thus died the chieftain whose unswerving loyalty to the French cause was the outcome of an intense personal jealousy of the young Arab leader. Absolutely fearless, but hard and rapacious, he had devoted the last years of his life to plunder and avarice in order to safeguard a future which he was never to enjoy.

All that summer (1843) the pursuit of the Emir and his *khalifas* continued relentlessly. No less than five times Abd el Kader eluded capture by a hair's breadth. Three times his camp was surprised by the French and all its equipment taken, though the Emir was able to make his escape. On another occasion his *khalifa* Ben Abd el Baki, who had commanded the *smala*, was killed at his side. At the end of September an Arab in French pay fired at him at point blank range; but the rifle failed to go off, and Abd el Kader shot the traitor dead with his pistol. During one of the attacks on the Emir's camp a young French trumpeter named Escoffier gave his horse to his captain who had been dismounted. 'You had better take it, Captain,' he said; 'you can rally the squadron and I cannot.' A moment later the young man was taken prisoner. While still in the hands of the Arabs he was awarded the Legion of Honour; and Roches gives us the curious information that Abd el Kader, before a grand parade of his troops, himself pinned the decoration on the Frenchman's breast.<sup>1</sup>

During the summer Bugeaud was made a Field Marshal. Roches, for his humbler services, was nominated *Chevalier* of the Legion of Honour. Bugeaud now felt that he could safely leave the direction of the war in the hands of the duc d'Aumale, and begged repeatedly to be relieved of his command; but the King would not give his consent. 'With his obsession about retirement,' said Louis-Philippe, 'the Marshal reminds me of a little character in one of Scarron's comedies . . . who carries a baby

<sup>1</sup> Escoffier was released a year later, and subsequently became keeper of the Tuilleries Gardens.



#### THE CAPTURE OF THE SMALA

Detail of a painting by Horace Vernet in the Versailles Museum

The portion reproduced represent, only one fourteenth part of this gigantic canvas  
*(Photo Giraudon)*



about in his arms, vainly trying to get rid of it and offering it to every one he meets. Our infant, Algeria, is in very good hands where it is, the Marshal's hands, and he must make up his mind to keep it.'

In the autumn the Emir withdrew to the Moroccan frontier leaving Ben Allal, his most faithful *khalifa*, in command of the regular army. Ben Allal had lost everything—his mother, his wives, his children, his brothers, had all been taken prisoner with the *smala*—but his sacrifice only strengthened his determination to resist the Christians to the end. On several occasions the *khalifa* had narrowly escaped being captured; and the Emir, aware of the perpetual danger to which he was exposed, summoned him at the beginning of November to join him. But the French were hot on Ben Allal's track. At dawn on November 11, in tropical rain, General Tempoure and his men came upon the smouldering fires of the bivouac which he had just left. They soon caught up with him. A battle was fought near the *Oued Malah* in which the Arabs were completely routed. Ben Allal himself was killed, and almost all his men were taken prisoner or left dead upon the field. The *khalifa*'s head was paraded from Oran to Algiers, and finally exhibited for three days at Miliana, by Bugeaud's orders, to impress Ben Allal's former administrators with the folly of continued resistance.

The special correspondent of *The Times* at Oran, using information supplied by 'the very best authorities', gave its readers a graphic account of this 'merc slaughter of unarmed men' by Bugeaud 'the butcher of the Bedouins', and of its sequel—an account which is more valuable for the light that it throws on the strained relations existing between England and France than as an historical indictment of French brutality: 'The spahis, or native cavalry, immediately after Embarek [Ben Allal] fell, cut off his head. The head of Embarek was then covered with honey by the spahis, and sent to Oran; arrived at Oran, the head of Embarek was then salted, and thence dispatched to Algiers. At Algiers the head of Embarek was "served up" at a soirée of Marshal Bugeaud, something in the style of the serving up on a charger of the head of John the Baptist mentioned in the New Testament. When all eyes had been sufficiently regaled with the sight of the brave chief of the desert—the unconquerable enemy of the French (conquered only by accident)—the Marshal, yielding to his instincts as a soldier, gave the head a funeral with the ceremony awarded

to the rank of a lieutenant, and the head of Embarek was at last buried, either at Médéa or Miliana, with all due military honours.'

To Bugeaud it now seemed that the war was at an end. At a banquet in Algiers on November 25, 1843, he said boastingly: 'I might, after the spring campaign, have proclaimed that Algeria had been conquered and subdued; I preferred to state less than the truth. But to-day, after the splendid victory on the 11th of this month in which the remnants of the Emir's infantry were annihilated and his first and most distinguished *khalifa* killed, I will boldly declare that all serious fighting is over. Abd el Kader, with the handful of cavalry which remains to him, may execute a *coup de main* against the frontier tribes who have submitted to us, but he cannot attempt anything on a large scale. How could he reconstitute even a small army? He has lost all power of levying taxes and of recruiting men; the country is organized by us and for us; everywhere taxes are paid to us and our orders are obeyed.'

There was an ominous calm as the year drew to its close; Bugeaud was soon to learn that he had sadly underestimated Abd el Kader's power of recovery.

With the coming of spring (1844), the French turned their attention towards the south-eastern part of Algeria where Abd el Kader's *khalifas* were still defiant. In March the duc d'Aumale took Biskra; in May General Marey was in Laghouat. It was his policy, Bugcaud explained, to make the French flag familiar in the south, to open up communications; and when the French press denounced these expeditions as 'mere glory-hunting', he added: 'We must imitate the English and advance with the sword in one hand, the footrule in the other.' While his lieutenants were in the south, the Governor-General occupied the little port of Dellys to the east of Algiers and harassed the Kabyles.

But these small campaigns were interrupted by a serious turn of affairs in the west, where Abd el Kader had been working to embroil France with Morocco. The Sultan, Abd el Rahman, was sympathetic towards his vassal, but he was cautious. The Emir realized that he could only be dragged into the war if the French could be tricked into violating his territory; and the vagueness of the frontier-line between Algeria and Morocco was likely, sooner or later, to give rise to just such a misunderstanding. When La Moricière decided to occupy the little border town of Lalla Maghrnia, the Moorish tribesmen, who considered it to be a

dependency of Oodjda, spontaneously proclaimed the Holy War. The Sultan at once dispatched his regulars under El Guenaoui to Oodjda, but with his habitual caution he urged his commander to do nothing provocative. Guenaoui summoned the French to evacuate Lalla Maghrnia; when they refused, he reported to his master and awaited further instructions. But his cavalry took matters into their own hands, and on May 30 there was a skirmish with French cavalry near Lalla Maghrnia, where the Moors were repulsed, leaving their dead upon the field of battle. Abd el Kader had achieved his object; war was now virtually inevitable.

On June 11 Bugeaud arrived at Lalla Maghrnia, and a few days later General Bedeau and Guenaoui met in a last effort to avert the catastrophe. Again Moorish firing broke out, and the parley ended in bloodshed. Neither commander wanted war, but the fanatical attitude of the frontier tribesmen made diplomacy impossible. Bugeaud, to show that he was not to be trifled with, occupied Oodjda, and at the same time wrote to Guenaoui to inform him that this was only a temporary measure. To Guenaoui's friendly but non-committal reply he wrote once more: 'We intend to preserve the frontier, as held by the Turks and Abd el Kader after them. We want nothing that is yours. But we desire that you should not receive nor aid Abd el Kader any further, nor revive him when he is almost dead and launch him afresh against us. That is not good friendship; it is war, and you have been warring against us thus for two years. We desire that you should confine in the interior of your country the *deira*<sup>1</sup> and the chiefs who have served Abd el Kader, disperse his regular troops, *goums* and *askers*; that you no longer receive troops that emigrate from our territory, and immediately send back those who have fled to you. . . . We bind ourselves to do the same by you if occasion should arise. These are the conditions of the observance of rules of good friendship between the two nations; if you do this, we shall be your friends, shall favour your trade and the Government of Abd er Rahman as far as lies in our power. If you choose to do the contrary, we shall be enemies. Reply immediately; and without any subterfuges, for I do not understand them.'

Bugeaud, having remained twenty-four hours at Oodjda, withdrew his troops and waited to see the effect of his demonstration. The Sultan waited too; he had invoked the aid of England, and was anxious to know how he stood before irrevocably committing

<sup>1</sup> The *smala* in its reduced form; plural of *douar*.

himself to a war with a great European Power. Meanwhile Roches was making a last minute appeal to Abd el Kader and a renewal of the promises made by Bugeaud in 1842. But the Emir, in his reply, showed little sign of weakening:

'To him who *still* calls himself our friend, to him who is *still* dear to me, to the eminent Liouc, son of Roches. Greeting to him who follows the true way . . .

'You urge me again to put a stop to a war which is, so you say, condemned by my religion and by humanity's laws. As to my religion, I know what it commands and what it forbids; it is not for a Christian to interpret the Koran to a Moslem. As to humanity, you would do well to tell the French to practise what they preach. Who, I ask you, are the greater offenders against humanity's laws, they whose armies have invaded the land of Arabs who never did them any harm, and brought ruin and desolation to their tents, or he who is fighting to repel this unjust aggression and to deliver his country from the yoke of infidel conquerors? . . . Let us have no more talk of the duties which religion and humanity impose upon me; and, in particular, do not try to dangle before my eyes the gold which your King would lavish on me if I were to accept the proposal which you make in his name to go and live near the House of God (the Kaabah at Mecca). Neither fear nor avarice will turn me from the way of the Lord, in which I walk to fight the oppressors of my country. If you want to put a stop to the evils of war, make me reasonable proposals and I shall be ready to listen . . . And to prove to you that I wish to make peace, I delegate all my powers to my brother in God Bou Hamidi whom I authorize to ask for an interview with the Marshal and to accept the treaty which he judges fit to impose on me, a treaty which I promise to observe faithfully. . . .'

Bugeaud refused to receive Bou Hamidi, but he allowed Roches to have a secret interview with him. It was not without some trepidation that the Frenchman rode out to meet once again the fanatical Kabyle at whose hands he had so nearly met his death after his flight from Tlemcen; but he always found 'an indescribable attraction in being confronted with a dramatic situation'. 'I hardly recognized the former *khalifa*', he wrote. 'He had aged a great deal; though he was barely thirty-eight years old, his beard and the ill-shaven hair about his forehead were turning grey. Once he had indulged in a good deal of luxury; but now his clothes, his arms, his horse and its trappings, were those of an .

ordinary cavalryman.' He approached Roches affably, but the well-remembered fanatical fire still gleamed in his eyes.

Bou Hamidi spoke first. Abd el Kader, he admitted, had been beaten; Bugeaud was victorious. But life was full of changing fortunes, and one day the roles of conqueror and conquered might be reversed. Let the victor be generous.

Bugeaud, replied Roches, had already shown his generosity. Let Abd el Kader surrender, and he would be allowed to go to Mecca; he would be given money enough for himself and his household.

What were riches to Abd el Kader, asked the *khalifa*; and as to Mecca, the Emir could go there without French help. He had sworn to 'regenerate the Algerian Arabs'. But God would allow him to make certain concessions: he would be content to govern a part of Algeria as a vassal of France, to pay what taxes the French thought fit to impose, and to give hostages.

France would never surrender a single square yard of the country which, by God's grace, she had conquered; that, answered Roches, was the Marshal's message. Abd el Kader, he added, would be personally responsible for the sufferings brought upon his people by the continuation of the war.

The situation was tense. Roches's voice had risen to a shout, and for a moment a murderous glint flashed in the *khalifa*'s eyes. Mohammed ben Kaddour, Mustapha ben Ismaël's nephew who was waiting near-by, hastened to the spot. But Bou Hamidi mastered his anger; the once proud *khalifa*, humble and pathetic now, began to beg for mercy: 'We are guests in a foreign land, O son of Roches; we are exiled; take pity on us, for our lot is hard.'

That evening Roches addressed a full report of his interview to Bugeaud: 'For Bou Hamidi, the proud Kabyle, to propose in his chief's name a treaty which would make Abd el Kader a vassal of France, his situation must indeed be precarious! He cannot feel much confidence in the refuge which Moulay Abd er Rahman is giving him . . . As to his accepting the generous offer which you authorized me to make, I know his character too well to suppose that he will do so until he is reduced to the last extremity. I foresee that between now and then we shall have to repulse more than one counter-attack . . .'

August came. Since Morocco would not yield, France decided to act—reluctantly, however, for England was watching with her

usual disapproval. Moreover, it was fully realized that the fate of Algeria hung in the balance, for at the first sign of a Moorish victory the whole country would rise in revolt. More than one French general was doubtful as to the wisdom of stirring up this new hornets' nest, but Bugeaud was quietly confident; he only awaited the excuse to strike. In the French camp it was whispered, and generally credited, that the Moors had a hundred thousand cavalry; actually they could not put more than a quarter of that number in the field, only a small proportion of whom were regulars. To oppose them, the French had some eight thousand men.

Meanwhile the Prince de Joinville, Louis-Philippe's youngest son, was cruising with a squadron near the Straits of Gibraltar. On August 6, after delivering an ultimatum which remained unanswered, he bombarded Tangier. Four days later Bugeaud received the news: 'Sir,' he replied at once, 'you have drawn a bill of exchange upon me. Be sure I shall not be long in honouring it. *Vive la France!*'

The Moorish army was now under the command of Moulay Mohammed, heir presumptive of the Sultan. Young, conceited, cocksure, he was no match for the wily old veteran of the *Empire* wars. Mohammed had seen the French hesitate, and mistook their caution for cowardice; 'his pride,' wrote Bugeaud, 'rose with his numbers', and soon the young Moor, spurred on by Abd el Kader's agents, was boasting that he would take Oran, that he would drive the Christians out of Africa. He scornfully ignored Bugeaud's ultimatum. While de Joinville and his squadron sailed on down the Atlantic coast to bombard Mogador, the French army advanced into Morocco. At the Oued Isly, a small tributary of the Moulouia, they halted; a few miles away, on the same bank of the winding stream, Mohammed and his cohorts awaited them.

On August 12 Bugeaud issued his final orders and retired immediately after dinner to his camp-bed. Now it happened that the officers not on duty were that evening giving a punch party in honour of two cavalry regiments which had just arrived from France. French soldiers were famous for their ingenuity; 'they had contrived,' wrote Roches, 'a great garden upon the banks of the Isly, with its boundaries and paths marked by splendid clumps of oleanders and tamarisks. Arches of greenery decorated the main walk which led to a large platform also surrounded by oleanders. The whole place was brilliantly lit by paper lanterns

of various colours'. In the sultry silence of that August night the toasts and the songs of the Frenchmen floated across the valley to the Moorish outposts.

The officers had but one regret—Bugeaud was not with them. It was a party after his own heart, an occasion to mix with his officers; but he was tired out, and who dared to wake him? His temper was uncertain; men who would not have hesitated to attack a dozen Arabs single-handed, begged to be excused the honour of disturbing the sleep of their beloved but hot-tempered commander. In the end Roches volunteered to go: 'I got a pretty lively reception. But how good he was! In a couple of words I told him why I had done it. He had lain down completely dressed, and so had only to put on his *képi* instead of the celebrated tassled nightcap which had given rise to the famous march *La Casquette du Père Bugeaud*,<sup>1</sup> and we were off. He swore a good deal on the way from his tent to the improvised garden, a distance of more than half a mile across rough ground entangled with tent ropes and horses' pickets.' But these difficulties were soon forgotten. Never had the old soldier received such an ovation. The officers crowded round him; the punch flowed.

Then Bugeaud spoke: 'The day after to-morrow, my friends,' he cried in his strong, resonant voice, 'will be a great day, I promise you. With our little army of 6,500 bayonets and 1,500 horse I am going to attack the Moorish Prince's army which, according to my information, amounts to 60,000 horse. I should be glad if they were twice or thrice as many, for the more they are, the greater will be their disorder and disaster. I have an army, he has only a mob. I will predict what will happen; but first I will explain to you my formation for attack. I arrange my little army in the shape of a boar's head. You understand? The right tusk is La Moricière, the left tusk is Bedeau, the muzzle is Pelissier, and I am between the ears. Who can stop the force of our thrust? My friends, we shall cut the Moorish army as a knife cuts butter. I have only one fear, that they may anticipate defeat and escape our blows.'

This, says Roches, was the gist of his speech; it was always impossible to reproduce the '*pittoresque inattendu de ses expressions*'. No one knew better than Bugeaud how to fire the enthusiasm of his soldiers, and next day the '*discours du punch*' was on every one's

<sup>1</sup> On one occasion, in nightshirt and nightcap, Bugeaud had driven off a surprise nocturnal attack.

lips; there was but one fear now in the French camp—the fear that the Moors might refuse battle.

That afternoon Bugeaud began to move forward along the river-bank, disguising his advance as a large-scale foraging party. At dawn on August 14 the French army made the first crossing of the winding Isly and advanced in dead silence; at six o'clock they reached a hill commanding another bend of the stream. On the slopes above the far bank lay the Moorish camp—‘or rather camps’ wrote Roches; ‘there were seven of them, and they covered an area greater than that of Paris. At the highest point, surrounded by a dense mass of Moors, could be seen Mohammed’s attendants, his standards, and the imperial parasol.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘hurrahs’ of the French soldiers soon gave the alarm. As they came forward with the bands playing, squadrons of Moorish cavalry surged down the hill-side to dispute the crossing of the stream which was, however, effected in perfect order and without much loss. Then the little French army—‘like a lion surrounded by a thousand jackals’—advanced ‘in splendid Egyptian formation’ to meet the main Moorish attack. For two hours the French infantry, withholding their fire till the last moment, repulsed charge after charge of cavalry and hurled them back in confusion; irresistibly the boar’s head was driving forward, splitting the Moorish forces in two. Field-guns trained upon Mohammed and his staff soon obliged that young man to furl the imperial parasol and to exchange his white charger and gold embroidered *burnous* for something more modest and less conspicuous.

When the nearest tents were reached, the Marshal launched his cavalry, and soon all fourteen of the Moorish guns were in French hands. There was sharp fighting round the Prince’s tent, till French infantry came up and completed the rout of the immense army which Bugeaud had rightly described as a mob. By noon the Marshal and his staff were picnicking in Mohammed’s magnificent tent off the ‘tea and cakes prepared that morning for the unlucky Prince’.

Moorish casualties were moderate, those of the French light; but the rout of the Mohammedan army was complete, and a big booty remained in Christian hands. The disconsolate Mohammed did not pause in his flight till he reached Taza.<sup>2</sup> Bugeaud, though he put it about that he intended following up his victory, realized

<sup>1</sup> This, incidentally, turned out to be of Parisian make.

<sup>2</sup> In Morocco; not, of course, Abd el Kader’s Algerian fortress.

that his soldiers were worn out by heat and fatigue; the men were falling sick at the rate of two hundred a day, and it would have been inhuman to have ordered a new advance.

Abd er Rahman, however, was ready for peace at any price, and emissaries arrived in the French camp to discuss terms. At the end of the audience Roches told the Marshal how surprised the Moorish chiefs were at the simplicity of his tent. ‘You may tell your Prince,’ said Bugeaud, ‘that he need not be ashamed at losing the battle of Isly, for he is young and inexperienced, and has never been to war before. He had for adversary an old soldier grown grey in fighting. Tell him that in war it is always necessary to provide for defeat, and that therefore a man should never encumber himself with articles of luxury and comfort that may serve as trophies to the enemy if they conquer. If Prince Mouley Mohammed had taken my camp, he would have had nothing to boast of in the captured tent of one of the King of France’s *khalifas*. May my experience be of service to him.’

Abd el Kader and a small body of cavalry had been helpless spectators of the Moorish defeat. He had offered assistance, but Mohammed had informed him that ‘the valiant heir of the Sultan was anxious to defeat unaided these Christians whom the son of Mahi ed Din could not conquer’. The Emir had also offered advice: ‘Take care not to pitch your camp too near that of the French,’ he wrote. ‘When you wish to engage the enemy, use neither artillery nor infantry. Attack them suddenly from all sides at once, so as to split up their forces. Retire before their cavalry, so as to draw them on into prepared ambushes.’ But the conceited young Moor had not listened, and he had paid the full penalty for his folly.

On September 10, 1844, a peace treaty was signed at Tangier. The French terms were generous; but the Sultan was obliged to outlaw Abd el Kader and to promise to refrain from giving any aid to the enemies of France—conditions which, owing to the independent attitude of the frontier tribesmen, he was quite unable to keep.

In the autumn Bugeaud returned home in triumph. Everywhere his praises were sung. ‘The Marshal is really an indescribable man,’ commented Saint-Arnaud, ‘interested in everything, talking of everything in the most lively and brilliant way, cleverly, sensibly. Yet he is quite illiterate, not able to translate a word of Latin; but capable of anything, and carryed out of a block of granite.’

In honour of his victory, Louis-Philippe conferred upon Bugeaud the title of duc d'Isly. Banquet succeeded banquet in an endless round; letters of congratulation poured in from all sides. To reach his family estate near Périgueux, he was forced to submit to more 'banquets, official receptions, orations, speeches, serenades and triumphal arches—nothing was spared him'. Not since Napoleon, had a general been so tirelessly feted. In Paris huge crowds flocked to the Tuileries Gardens to see the tent of the Moorish Prince which had been set up on a wooden platform in the centre of the big pond. Horace Vernet, who had already completed his vast panorama of the capture of the *smala*, began sketches for a painting of the battle of Isly, and the Duke found time to make suggestions and to correct mistakes in the positions of the various officers. In the finished picture, a careful search will disclose in front of Mohammed's tent the figure of Léon Roches<sup>1</sup>—'Mon interprèti principal', wrote Bugeaud in his dispatches, 'qui se distingue en toute occasion de guerre pour laquelle la nature l'avait fait.'

<sup>1</sup> Roches only published two volumes of his autobiography, covering the first twelve of the projected *Trente-deux ans à travers l'Islam*. After Isly he was in Paris, acting as escort to a number of francophile Arab chiefs who were to be suitably dazzled by the splendours of European civilization; then, in Tangier, as Secretary to the French Legation, where Bugeaud continued to consult him on Algerian affairs. Little is known about the last fifty years of his life. For a time he was French Consul in Tunis, and in the sixties he served as Minister to Japan. He carried on a friendly correspondence with Abd el Kader for many years, though he never met him again. He died in 1901.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FALSE PROPHETS

IN January, 1845, Bugeaud, as *député* for Excideuil, made an important speech to the French Chamber in defence of his Algerian policy. The whole framework of Abd el Kader's kingdom, he told them, had been destroyed piecemeal; one by one the tribes had been forced to submit; and now the Emir had been driven to seek asylum in Morocco. 'But this does not mean that he will not come back,' Bugeaud continued; 'I think I can promise you that he will. He will no longer be dangerous, but he will make mischief; that is why we must remain strong and on our guard . . . We are in a position to make the Arabs repent of any insurrection, but they must be made to feel the use of force as little as possible. It is by means of a government which is strong, and at the same time paternal, that we can obtain the submission of the Arabs. Not absolute submission; there will still be occasional insurrections, but they will be rare.' Every Arab, he went on to explain, was a fighting man; and though civil colonization was well enough in the coast towns, military colonization was essential in the interior of the country. 'Our colonists must never let their muskets rust; they must always be ready to snatch them up. They must be thoroughly disciplined, for discipline alone can give strength to masses. I insist very strongly upon this idea of military colonization, for it seems to me to be fundamental . . .'

But even Bugeaud could not conceal the admiration he felt for the Arab leader, and in particular for his method of organizing the country. 'He is a genius,' said the Marshal, 'and we did not think that we could in any way improve upon his system of administration. We have changed the men; we have left the system untouched.' But alas! it was not enough merely to change the men. Under Abd el Kader taxes had been willingly paid, for the money was used to finance the *jihad*; under the French (as under the Turks) it was employed for the benefit of the conquerors only. Moreover the haughty, supercilious attitude of the French officials and their 'contemptuous display of superiority' infuriated the Arabs.

Discontent grew in secret, and it was not long before it came out into the open.

By January, 1845, it had become obvious that although the Emir remained in hiding, *agents provocateurs* were busy in the Oran province. One day some sixty natives, apparently unarmed, presented themselves at the entrance of the fort of Sidi-bel-Abbès, near Oran, with a petition for the commanding officer. The sentry allowed the foremost of them to enter; then, his suspicions aroused, he attempted to close the gates. He was immediately shot. The rabble, pulling out weapons which they had kept hidden under their *burnouses*, burst into the fort and attacked the soldiers. The commanding officer's house was stormed, and his orderly shot; but the officer himself was out with a skirmishing party. After some grim fighting the last of the Arabs was killed, but not before more than twenty Frenchmen had lost their lives. It was discovered later that all these Arabs belonged to the brotherhood of the *Darkaouia*, one of the most fanatical of the puritan sects. The widespread influence of these religious brotherhoods was soon to give rise to another serious crisis in Algeria.

In the Dahra, the mountainous district between the river Chélif and the sea, there lived a youth who went by the name of Mohammed ben Abdallah. He was not much more than twenty years old, and spectacularly good-looking. His private life seemed to be beyond reproach; he prayed from morning till night, and in his tattered and filthy rags looked the very picture of Mussulman sanctity. He lodged with an elderly widow who had recently adopted him out of piety; but his more especial companion was a pet goat which shared his infrequent meals and his still rarer confidences. The whole *mise en scène* was calculated to arouse interest and speculation, and soon Mohammed had become, as he had intended, an object of lively curiosity in the neighbourhood.

Now there was an old Mohammedan legend which foretold that a man named Mohammed ben Abdallah would come from God in the hour of need and drive the Christians into the sea. One stormy night the silent young man announced with dramatic suddenness that he was none other than the Messenger of God. Before his guardian could question him further, he vanished into the darkness.

A swift publicity campaign soon brought him numerous followers. 'I am the Destined One who is to appear at the hour foretold in the prophecies, at the hour of deliverance,' he repeated.

incessantly; 'the *Moulay Saa* (Master of the Hour) has appeared'. Even the goat began to indulge in prophecy, earning for his master the name by which he came to be known throughout Algeria—Bou Maza—'Father of the goat'.

Bou Maza sized up his followers with unerring accuracy; to the more devout he held out the promise of invulnerability, to the more worldly he offered the spoil of the Christians and, since this was not readily available, loot from the tribes who were collaborating with them. He also proclaimed himself invincible and invulnerable, and began to spread suitable legends to support the latter assertion. A rifle, so it was said, had been fired at him at point-blank range; but instead of a bullet, there had emerged from the barrel a feeble trickle of water which fell harmlessly at his feet.

He had soon gathered round him not only many Arabs who genuinely believed in his mission to expel the Christians, but all the scum of the district who were out for what they could get. He saw to it that his partisans did not arrive empty-handed, and even the least reputable and most grasping were obliged to pay for their tickets in his giant lottery.

At first the French gave little attention to the prophet of the Dahra who, though working independently of the Emir, gave valuable help to his cause; they were soon to realize that, after Abd el Kader, he was the most formidable adversary they were to encounter in Algeria. Many of those Arabs who had half-heartedly supported the French now flocked to join Bou Maza. To provide loot and to make a show of his strength, the young man opened his campaign by falling upon two francophile *kaïds*. One he killed with his own hands; the other, protesting to the last his devoted adherence to the new leader, was tortured to death.

Saint-Arnaud at once marched out of Orléansville to meet him, and several engagements followed in which Bou Maza was worsted. After one of these, fifteen Kabyle prisoners were shot in cold blood by the French (April, 1845). 'The prestige of the *sheriff* who proclaimed himself invincible is destroyed,' announced Saint-Arnaud optimistically; 'the snowball of revolt has been brought to a standstill.' But Bou Maza was undismayed, and circulated more legends to explain away his reverses. Several French prisoners had fallen into his hands; these were killed, and their mutilated bodies paraded through the mountains to give a fresh stimulus to the insurrection.

Another skirmish took place in which Bou Maza attained a certain degree of success; to celebrate it he burned two of the French prisoners alive. Two days later the small daughter of a sutler who fell into the hands of the Kabyles was hacked in pieces.<sup>1</sup>

Such brutality, though not entirely unprovoked, seemed to justify a war without mercy, and Saint-Arnaud gave orders to '*fusiller à la Caligula tous les gueux qu'on trouverait les armes à la main*', while he himself set about burning the crops and homesteads '*comme un vrai Vandale*'. Bugeaud, though he still doubted the seriousness of the situation, now appeared in the Ouarensenis, on the other bank of the Chélif, where he spent the month of May (in ceaseless rain) fighting petty engagements which were followed by partial and insincere submissions. Meanwhile the brunt of the struggle was being borne by Saint-Arnaud with a far smaller force on the right bank of the river. On the 21st the latter obtained a decisive victory, and killed more than two hundred of the enemy. For the moment the disconsolate prophet withdrew into the mountains, hotly pursued by the 'French' *agha*, Hadj Ahmad, who killed all but two of his bodyguard and captured his standard. Bou Maza soon afterwards took his revenge by murdering the old *sheikh* while he was celebrating the wedding of his son, and carrying off all the wedding guests.

It was during this spring campaign that Saint-Arnaud succeeded for the first time in compelling the defeated Kabyles to surrender their arms. 'I have had two fine fights in the frightful mountains of the Beni-Hidjas,' he wrote to his brother. 'I wasted their country so effectively that they were compelled to sue for mercy and, what has never before been seen in Africa, to give up their guns. The Marshal himself could hardly believe it; nor the veteran officers, even when they saw the rifles laid before my tent.' The gun barrels, said the *Moniteur Algérien*, were sent to Algiers 'to be used in the arsenal and various military establishments, for banisters, gratings, balconies, etc., where they will serve as evidence of the disarmament'.

Among the episodes which brought greatest discredit upon the name of France, none was more notorious than the affair of the Dahra caves. In June, Péliissier was in hot pursuit of the Ouled Riah, and forced them to seek refuge, as they had always done in moments of crisis, in an elaborate chain of grottoes in the Dahra

<sup>1</sup> Accounts of atrocities are always difficult to verify, but these gruesome facts were reported by an apparently reliable witness.

mountains. At first they refused to submit; but seeing that their situation had become hopeless, they at length agreed to give themselves up and to pay a considerable indemnity, on condition that the French withdrew, and that their lives were spared. Pélissier had been making preparations to 'smoke out' the rebellious tribesmen; he refused their terms, and proceeded to set fire to the masses of brushwood which had been dropped into position from ledges above the main entrance to the caves. The smaller exits had been roughly sealed, but a favourable current of air drew the smoke inwards. All night long, by the light of a brilliant moon, the murderous flames were fed.

A terrible spectacle greeted the eyes of the French soldiers when at last the smoke began to clear and it became possible to enter the grotto. Bodies lay heaped together in the furthest recesses of the caves—women with their infants in their arms, young men and old, girls, children—their blackened faces convulsed with the agony of their suffering; of the thousand who had sought refuge there, only a handful had escaped death.

When the news reached Algiers, Bugeaud attempted to silence the local press; when he found that he had failed, he bravely stood by Pélissier who had acted, he said, in the spirit of the orders he had received. In Paris, in a debate in the Upper Chamber (July 11, 1845), the massacre was denounced on almost all sides. The Prince de la Moskowa declared it to be 'the calculated, cold-blooded murder of a defenceless enemy'; Montalambert was 'disgusted', but in reality more apprehensive of the impression the story would make in England. Almost alone, Soult, President of the Council, attempted to find extenuating circumstances for Pélissier's conduct: 'I deplore it,' he said; 'in Europe such an action would be horrible, detestable. In Africa it is war itself.' The French press, while admitting Bugeaud's pluck in standing by his subordinate, endorsed the verdict of the Chamber; and *Le Courier Français* bitterly denounced 'this cannibal act, this foul deed which is a blot on our military history and a stain on our flag'.

In Africa, however, these barbarous methods continued; if there were fewer scandals in the future, it was not that the senior officers became more humane, only that they took better care to cover the traces of their crimes. Two months later, when Saint-Arnaud suffocated fifteen hundred natives (among whom were many women and children) in another grotto in the same district, he took the precaution of seeing that not a single victim escaped.

'No one went into the cave; not a soul . . . but myself,' he wrote. In a confidential report he told the Marshal everything, 'plainly, without exaggeration'. Bugeaud read it, and his silence marked his approval. From now on, it was to be a war of ruthless extermination; the rules of civilized warfare had been jettisoned.

In the autumn the French were confronted with a new and perplexing problem. More than a dozen leaders of revolt, all called (or calling themselves) Mohammed ben Abdallah in fulfilment of the prophecy, sprang up in the region round the Chélik. Some of these also adopted the name of Bou Maza; others were distinguished by their surnames, or were known after the tribes to which they belonged. No sooner was one head of this hydra cut off, than two others sprang up in its place. 'I hunt them to death, and up they come again like mushrooms,' wrote Saint-Arnaud in despair. 'It is a perfect maze; one cannot find one's way. Besides the original Bou Maza we have Mohammed bel Cassem, Bou Ali, Ali Chergui, Si Larbi, Bel Bej—I get utterly lost with them all. I have killed Ali Chergui and Bou Ali, and I would like to catch Ben Hinni . . .'

Some of these minor prophets gave a good deal of trouble before they were caught. Mohammed ben Abdallah, the Bou Maza of the Beni-Menacer, was finally deserted by his own tribesmen and handed over to the French. He was tried at Algiers, and condemned to be executed in the midst of the tribe he had stirred up. Another Mohammed ben Abdallah appeared in Tittery, where he succeeded in decapitating one or two 'French' *kāïds*. Then General Marey, with three thousand men, drove him back into the mountains where for some time to come he continued to be a considerable nuisance.

Another Mohammed ben Abdallah, who gave himself the name of El Fadel, announced that he was the resurrected Jesus. He invited his followers to go unarmed into battle, since he could strike the enemy dead by means of magic. In a curious letter which he wrote to General Cavaignac, he urged the Christians to adopt Islam: 'Cease to do injustice and wrong; God loves it not,' he concluded. 'Know that He has sent me that you may submit to me. He has said "submit to Me and to My messenger". You know that a man will come who shall reign to the end of time. That man is I, Mohammed, sent from God and chosen from the most holy of the followers of the Prophet. I am the likeness of him who



ARABS ATTACKING THE MARABOUT OF SIDI BRAHIM

From Christian, *L'Afrique français*



issued from the breath of God. I am the likeness of our Lord Jesus. I am Jesus restored to life, as all know who believe in God and His Prophet. If you believe not the words which I speak to you in His name, you will repent of it, as surely as there is an omnipotent God in heaven.'

Yet another, Bou Maza of the Beni-Zoug-Zoug, was eventually arrested by his own people and handed over to the French at Miliana. He was about twenty years old, 'incredibly fanatical and arrogant', and claimed to be a brother of the original Bou Maza. He replied fearlessly to his cross-examiners:

Q. What have you to blame the French for? Theft, exaction, injustice, crimes? Don't be afraid to speak the truth.

A. None of that. The Arabs hate you because you are not of their faith, because you are foreigners. Now you come to take their country; to-morrow you will want their virgins, their children. The Arabs said to my brother: 'Lead us; let us begin the war again. With every day that passes, the Christians become stronger; let us finish with them now.'

Q. In spite of what you say, there are a great many Arabs who like us and are loyal to our cause.

A. There is but one God. My life is in His hands and not in yours. I will be frank with you. Every day you meet Arabs who tell you that they love you and are your faithful servants. Do not believe them; they lie to you from fear or from interest. Whenever a *sharif* arises who they think is able to conquer you, they will follow him; they would attack you even in Algiers.

Q. How can the Arabs hope to conquer us when they are led by chiefs who have no army, no cannon and no money?

A. Victory comes from God; when he chooses, He makes the weak to triumph and casts down the strong.

The poor wretch was led away to execution.

Meanwhile the genuine Bou Maza had reappeared upon the scene. On September 22 (1845), the very day that his namesake of the Beni-Menacer was put to death, he surprised a French column under Bourjolly, put it to flight, and advanced as far as the outskirts of Mostaganem. Though he was forced to retire, he kept Saint-Arnaud and Canrobert busy throughout the winter, while the main strength of the French army was at deadly grips with Abd el Kader.<sup>1</sup> The weather was exceptionally severe, and

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter xx.

in January two hundred and thirty French soldiers were frozen to death near Sétif and several hundred more were invalidated for life. 'What a war!' wrote Saint-Arnaud when he heard the news. 'Four days ago the thermometer was registering 20° (C.); to-day there are three degrees of frost. You pass dry-foot over the bed of a stream, not a drop of water to moisten your lips; two hours later there is ten foot of water in it, a roaring torrent which makes any crossing out of the question. There is no wood, no fodder, not a shack—absolutely nothing! Everything has to be brought. The Arab carries nothing but his rifle, his cartridges, and a knife to cut off your head . . . They flee, they attack with equal speed and fury; we are always at a disadvantage. We wage a war that brings us no glory, and which in the long run is as costly as the battle of Austerlitz.'

Sometimes victorious, more often defeated; usually independent, on rare occasions co-operating with Abd el Kader; Bou Maza gave the French no peace. In March he received a severe arm wound in an engagement with Saint-Arnaud's men—an injury which never healed—and during the summer of 1846 he was little in evidence. His work was carried on by a new false prophet—Ya-Ya ben Ya-Ya. The task of subjugating the country seemed every day more hopeless. 'Every three years the country has to be reconquered, for we are building on sand,' wrote a French officer pessimistically. 'The Arabs are a race of fanatics at the mercy of the *marabouts*.'

Winter gave the French little respite, and spring brought a fresh crop of prophets. Ya-Ya ben Ya-Ya, who had been 'killed' the previous year, took the field again in March. But Bou Maza himself began to show signs of flagging. His wound had exploded the legend of his invulnerability and weakened his prestige. 'I am half afraid that he won't come back,' wrote Saint-Arnaud who was bent on capturing him personally.

On April 13, after exactly two years of desperate resistance, Bou Maza gave himself up. That morning he had ridden over to visit *kaïd* El Haceni, one of his supporters; in his tent he found four of Saint-Arnaud's native agents—the *kaïd* had gone over to the enemy. 'This was the last blow,' wrote Saint-Arnaud. 'He came to a rapid decision: "Take me to Orléansville, to Colonel Saint-Arnaud himself," he said, adding that he wished to surrender to me as he had fought most with me. The others obeyed. They still trembled before Bou Maza who kept his arms—two pistols

loaded with eight balls.' They set out for Orléansville, Bou Maza leading and the poor-spirited Arabs in his rear, while a horseman went on ahead to warn the colonel.

Well in advance of his guards, still armed, Bou Maza dismounted and walked into the presence of his old enemy.

'Bou Maza is in my hands,' wrote Saint-Arnaud that evening; 'he has been here these two hours. He is a handsome and proud young man. We stared into one another's eyes with some satisfaction. He is twenty-five, rather tall and slender, elegant even. He bears glorious wounds. His large, dark eyes, rimmed with long lashes and surmounted by strongly arched brows, flash with a deep fire. His rather full lips, prominent chin and bronzed complexion reveal violent passions. Nothing about him gives a hint of his extraordinary adventures nor of his cruelty.'

'Bou Maza is no ordinary man,' he added a few days later; 'his influence over the Arabs is inconceivable. The better one gets to know him, the more it will be appreciated what harm he might have done us, and the importance of his capture. He has indomitable audacity, plenty of common sense and, above all, an exalted fanaticism. He believed himself called to great things. And why should he not have believed it? He was brought up and put forward by the powerful sect of Moulay Abd el Kader of which he was a member. He comes from the Driss family of Morocco. The Sultan of Morocco himself corresponded with him, helped him with money and powder, and encouraged him in the Holy War. All our chiefs, without exception, Sidi Larbi at their head, provided him with men, money and powder. It would be unfortunate if the revelations of a court martial were to lay bare these wounds in our African history. What capital the enemies of France would make out of it! I have advised the Marshal not to bring Bou Maza before a court martial. It would be best to use him—if we dare to—or to send him to France and forget about him. To-day Bou Maza hates and despises the Arabs and is full of admiration for us. His last efforts have disgusted and disillusioned him. He found us on guard everywhere, found my camps and my agents everywhere.'

'Tired of fighting, tired of the adventurous life he was leading, he saw that his time was up and that he could no longer incite the tribesmen who had lost faith in him and whom we had conquered. So he made up his mind, and came and surrendered to

the French chief whom he knew best. With Bou Maza, half of Abd el Kader has fallen.'

The discredited prophet was taken to France under a strong guard. On his way through Marseilles he was treated as 'a mere vagabond'; the Parisians, however, went to the other extreme, and the man who had burned French prisoners alive was feted and entertained everywhere. Saint-Arnaud, though he saw the folly of such behaviour, was glad enough to reap the reward of this publicity which he believed might bring him the promotion he so much coveted.

In July the duc de Montpensier, youngest son of Louis-Philippe, gave a ball at the Parc des Minimes in the Bois de Vincennes. It cost 200,000 francs, and all the aristocracy, beauty and intellect of France were invited. The setting of the ball had a military character—the arch forming the entrance to the park was ingeniously constructed out of old bronze cannon, there was a great star of the Legion of Honour made out of ram-rods, and suits of armour were set up among the trees. The usual attractions were there too—coloured lamps and Chinese lanterns, fireworks, choirs of children, fanfares of trumpets. But the *pièce de résistance* was a collection of tents, conspicuous among which were those captured from the Sultan of Morocco, Abd el Kader and the Bey of Constantine (all fitted up with hideous mahogany furniture). Victor Hugo, as he wandered through the gardens, noticed two Arabs in white *burnouses*—the *Kadi* of Constantine and Bou Maza. 'Bou Maza,' he observed, 'has fine eyes but an ugly expression, a handsome mouth but a terrible smile; you can see that he is false and savage; there is something of the fox, something of the tiger about him. I noticed, however, a pleasant enough expression on his face when, thinking he was alone, he approached Abd el Kader's tent and studied it. It was as though he was saying to it: What are you doing here?'

Bou Maza lived in Paris in style, with a fine house in the Champs-Elysées and a pension of 15,000 francs from the Government. Society women took him up. Soon, inevitably, all this flattery went to his head. When he announced that he had more than a million francs hidden in silos in Algeria, credulous officials believed him; when the lie was exposed, there was talk of putting him in prison. 'My first thoughts are always best,' wrote Saint-Arnaud. 'I wanted to have him shot, and now I am sorry that I didn't.' At last Bou Maza became so intolerable that he was put

under guard. In 1848 he took advantage of the Revolution to make his escape, but was re-captured on the way to the coast and imprisoned at Ham. The following year he was released by Louis-Napoleon; and later, through the intercession of the Grand Duchess Stéphanie of Baden, was given a comfortable house at Villers-Cotterets.

On the outbreak of the Crimean War, Bou Maza asked leave of Napoleon III to fight for the Turks against the Russians. The Emperor not only gave his permission but presented him with a handsome sword. Thus, by a curious turn of fortune, the old enemy of France found himself fighting side by side with Saint-Arnaud and the very men who for two years had been his most relentless enemies. Nothing more was heard of Bou Maza after the war, and it is presumed that he lost his life during the Anatolian campaign at the head of his corps of Bashi-Bazouks.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SIDI BRAHIM

WE must turn back to the spring of 1845.

While Abd el Kader, encamped on Moorish soil near the Algerian frontier, was waiting patiently for the turn of events to place him once more upon the stage, news reached him of revolt in the Dahra. Neither Bou Maza himself, nor his shoal of imitators, were acting in collaboration with the Emir, whose methods they criticized and whose faith they considered luke-warm. But these fanatics were of immense value to his cause by distracting the attention of the French from the western frontier of Algeria. In August the Marshal wrote home to his wife: 'Abd el Kader has collected thirty or forty thousand *émigrés* round him. It is obvious that he is getting ready to come back, and Morocco is not stopping him. There is a permanent danger in that quarter.' Frontier posts were warned to redouble their vigilance. In September the Marshal's anxiety was justified; Abd el Kader's cavalry began to make raids across the frontier, and soon it was reported that the Emir himself was moving eastwards.

On the coast, some twenty miles short of the Moroccan frontier, lay the French outpost of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet, known to-day as Nemours. In the autumn of 1845 this little fort was under the command of Colonel Montagnac. He had been given the strictest orders to remain on the defensive, but this passive role ill-suited a temperament as fiery, brutal and restless as his. His confessed policy was 'to lay waste the country, to massacre the inhabitants, or, failing that, to transport them *en masse* to the Marquesas Islands'. He had no patience with the pacific attitude of the French press, and deplored their 'incredible stupidity' in censuring Colonel Pélissier's conduct at Dahra. Daring raids and ruthless reprisals alone, he believed, could achieve a decisive conclusion. It was the dream of every French officer to capture Abd el Kader. Montagnac, who with all his faults was no coward, was determined to realize it or to die in the attempt. Anything was better, he said, than sitting month after month cooped up at Djemmaa-Ghazaouet

'like an oyster in a shell'. When he received news that Abd el Kader had crossed the frontier he threw caution to the winds, disobeyed his instructions, and prepared to march out of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet.

He set off on the evening of September 21 at ten o'clock, with about a dozen officers and 400 men. The officers included Majors Froment Coste and Courby de Cognord, the battalion's adjutant Dutertre, and Captains Géreaux and Burgaud. A skeleton force under Captain Coffyn stayed behind to hold the blockhouses of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet.

The following morning a report reached Montagnac that Abd el Kader was advancing with a strong force. The Colonel, after consulting with his staff, decided to go forward. In the course of the afternoon a messenger arrived from Barral with a demand from General Cavaignac, French commander of the Tlemcen district, for 300 men. The message was considerably delayed, since it had been taken first to Djemmaa-Ghazaouet. Again Montagnac conferred with his senior officers. To part with three-quarters of his force, he said, would mean retreat, and retreat would be taken by the Arabs for cowardice; his own opinion was that they should ignore the demand and go forward. Coste and Courby de Cognord agreed. Already scouts had reported the presence of Arab horsemen, and a few shots had been exchanged; the prey was at hand.

While they were still encamped, a couple of small Arab children appeared with chickens to sell. They expressed a lively interest in French artillery, but their charming innocence deceived no one; they were told that the thickets were bristling with guns, and then sent off home to disseminate this highly inaccurate information. That evening large fires were lit in the French camp, and by the light of the moon the little army slipped quietly away. A few shots showed them that the ruse had not succeeded; but they advanced another six miles without serious opposition and then halted. Night was passed without sleep; no fires could be lit, no smoking was allowed; with frayed nerves the troops awaited the dawn.

They were now among the hills, and daylight showed that the crests were strongly held by the enemy, seven or eight hundred of whom could be seen against the skyline, all of them cavalry. At seven o'clock Montagnac, taking with him rather more than two-thirds of his whole force, went forward, leaving Coste and

about a hundred men in charge of the camp and equipment. After advancing some three miles, leading their horses in order to spare them, the French halted in full view of the enemy.

The cavalry now mounted, and Montagnac ordered the charge. It was sixty men against eight hundred. A dozen Frenchmen fell before they had reached the enemy lines; at the end of ten minutes half Montagnac's little force was out of action, and it became necessary to sound the retreat. But as they withdrew they were joined by the infantry who had been moving forward, and a new attack became possible. Now it was the Arabs who fell back, and the unsuspecting Montagnac eagerly pushed forward in their pursuit.

They had reached the entrance to a small ravine when suddenly there appeared from all sides thousands of Arabs who had been hidden by the folds of the ground and of whose existence Montagnac had not even had a suspicion. There was no question now either of victory or of retreat; all that remained was to die bravely. Though help, if it came at all, must come too late, a cavalryman was at once dispatched with a message to Coste. Then drum and trumpet sounded, and the Frenchmen formed a square; the moment for the last stand had come. As Montagnac took up his position in the centre of the square a ball struck him in the stomach. 'Captain Froment Coste!' he cried, and fell mortally wounded. A sergeant immediately galloped away to carry out the last order of his commander. More than five hundred shots were fired after him, but he came safely through the hail of bullets and was soon lost from sight in the smoke of the battle. A few moments later Montagnac handed over the command to Courby de Cognord.

For a little longer the impossible struggle continued with rapidly mounting casualties; then Courby de Cognord at the head of the remaining hussars attempted a charge in a last effort to disengage the column. At the same moment Abd el Kader and his regulars appeared upon the heights dominating the ravine. Courby de Cognord's horse was shot from under him. A hussar at once dismounted and offered him his own, but a few minutes later the second horse suffered the same fate. The charge was brought to a standstill; only a handful of French cavalry now remained. Then suddenly the whole plain became alive with Arabs and Kabyles, and the slaughter began.

Meanwhile Coste had begun to advance from the camp with sixty men, leaving Géreaux behind in charge of the remainder.

When the two messengers gave him the news of the plight of Montagnac and his men, he broke into the double. Each minute the distant firing was growing less vigorous; after half an hour all was silent. Coste halted. He understood; the fight was over. He immediately ordered his men to turn about, for he saw that their only chance of safety lay in regaining the camp and joining up with Géreux.

But it was too late, for the Arab horsemen soon caught up with them. Scarcely had Coste time to form a square before the attack began. One cry alone came from the little group of Frenchmen as the thousands of Arabs swept down upon them: '*O mon commandant! nous sommes perdus.*' Coste turned; he saw before him a young rifleman, a mere boy. 'How old are you?' he asked. 'Twenty-three,' answered the youth. The Major smiled kindly; he understood how hard it was to die so young, to die before one had known what life was. 'Well,' he said gently, 'you will have seventeen years less to suffer than I have suffered. Look at me; see what it is to die with a stout heart and head held high.' 'Forgive me,' answered the youth; 'you will see that the young can fight as well as the old.' Hardly had he spoken when a ball struck Coste in the forehead. Five minutes later the fight was over. The young rifleman, true to his word, had been wounded three times before being made prisoner.

In the camp Géreux and his eighty men had heard the gradual slackening of the fire. Then it had ceased altogether, and there followed a silence broken only by the shrill cries of the victors. Over the plain the smoke rose slowly and hung in a heavy pall above the horror of the battle-field. All at once could be heard the clatter of hoofs; a horse was approaching at tremendous speed from the direction of the engagement. Clinging to the saddle was a hussar, a man named Daveine. Without once slackening his speed he swept through the camp. 'They are all dead . . . it's all over . . .' he shouted, and vanished in the direction of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet; the sun, the horrors he had witnessed, had driven him crazy.

But Géreux understood; as soon as the Arabs had divided the plunder it would be his turn. The six mules and three horses were hastily packed with the camp equipment, and the company moved off towards the north. Neither the Captain nor his Lieutenant, Chapdelaine, had any clear policy. Retreat was impossible, for the Arab cavalry could overtake them immediately; but inaction

was unbearable. Soon they came in sight of a small, whitewashed building surmounted by a dome and about the size of a garden summerhouse—the *marabout*, or tomb, of Sidi Brahim. A roughly-built stone wall about three feet high surrounded the building, which was partially shaded by an overhanging fig-tree. Here, at least, they could sell their lives dearly. But the tomb was already occupied by a handful of Arabs. Fixing bayonets, the Frenchmen charged and soon succeeded in ejecting them, though not without a few casualties on both sides.

Géreaux at once set about organizing the defence of the tomb. Loop-holes were hastily made in the walls, and twenty men placed for the protection of each face of the building. The three horses were taken inside the outer walls, but there was no room for the mules which soon fell into the hands of the enemy. The provisions were collected together and counted; they were found to consist of a few rolls of bread, a handful or two of potatoes and a bottle of absinthe. So carelessly had they set out, that it was only now discovered that they had no water at all.

It was noon. A few minutes later the enemy began to appear, flushed with victory, drunk with blood. ‘They flung themselves like an unstemmed torrent, like the waves of a raging sea against the crumbling walls of the little *marabout*,’ wrote Tréssy, one of its small band of defenders. The Frenchmen fired at point-blank range, and the attackers were forced to retire, leaving the neighbourhood of the *marabout* strewn with their dead.

Still the numbers of Arabs increased. Now could be seen the banners of the Emir’s regulars and, in their centre, Abd el Kader himself. They halted about a quarter of a mile away, and the French immediately opened fire. Several Arabs fell, and one bullet grazed Abd el Kader’s cheek. He was dictating a letter. Then an Arab horseman came forward, threw his rifle down, and rode out towards the *marabout* holding a slip of paper above his head. Both sides, as if by common consent, withheld their fire. Near the fig-tree was a long, cleft stick which had once been used for picking the fruit, and this was held above the wall to receive the message. The bearer was not allowed inside the wall lest he should see the shortage of provisions. Lévy, the French interpreter, read the message aloud: if the French surrendered they would be well treated; if they resisted, all would perish. Géreaux turned inquiringly towards his men, but no one spoke; words were unnecessary. ‘We will never surrender! We

are few, but we can fight. Help will come,' said the Captain. Cheers greeted his words. A few lines were scribbled on the back of the Emir's note, and the paper returned to the messenger.

But Abd el Kader did not accept this refusal as final, and a second messenger rode out from the Arab lines. This time the Emir confined himself to threats. He had eighty-two French prisoners in his hands; if the defenders of the *marabout* did not surrender, these men would be executed. 'They are in the hands of God,' wrote Géreaux. 'We have plenty of food and ammunition; we will hold out.'

Yet a third messenger came forward, with a letter written in French by one of the prisoners. 'You have no food or ammunition,' it said, 'and you have no hope of getting help. You are in my power. I could take you by assault, but it would mean sacrificing five or six hundred men to take fifty or sixty. I will not do this; I will starve you out.' Géreaux did not want to send a reply; but a corporal took the note and scribbled upon it: 'M. . . . pour Abd el Kader! The *Chasseurs d'Orléans* die, but they never surrender.' The Captain read it with a smile: 'You're right,' he said, 'send it.'

When a fourth messenger began to approach, the French lost patience and fired at him. He returned to the Arab lines, where further discussions were seen to be taking place. Abd el Kader now employed new and more sinister tactics. Among the French prisoners was Dutertre, the battalion's adjutant, who though slightly wounded could still walk. Abd el Kader now ordered him to plead with his compatriots; if he failed to persuade them to surrender he would be killed. He came forward, his face deathly pale. At first he refused to speak; but when his guards goaded him on, a sudden torrent of words poured from his bloodless lips. 'Comrades! the rest of the battalion is dead or taken prisoner, and Abd el Kader has sent me to tell you to surrender. But I tell you to hold out against these butchers, to fight to the death.' Perhaps one of the Arabs understood French, perhaps the fire of those words needed no translation; in an instant two shots rang out and Dutertre fell. The dying man was dragged off into some shrub, from which an Arab soon re-emerged with a head on a lance. As he waved it defiantly in sight of the French, a bullet struck him and he fell dead.

More furious assaults followed against the tomb, assaults which were costly to the Arabs but which did little harm to the defenders.

At three o'clock the Emir withdrew a short distance with his main forces, leaving a strong guard round the *marabout*. An hour later a line of horsemen appeared on the horizon. Hope rose; might it not be Barral's column which was known to be in the neighbourhood? A flag was quickly improvised from a piece of a red sash, a blue cravat, and a white handkerchief tied to a stick, and this tricolor proudly planted on the top of the fig-tree by a soldier who miraculously passed unscathed through a concentrated fire of bullets. Strained eyes watched the thread of cavalry slip into the distance without a sign of recognition. It was, after all, a common Arab custom to hoist a flag above a *marabout*.

Night, with its welcome freshness after stifling heat, passed uneventfully for the besieged Frenchmen. In the morning Abd el Kader dispatched his prisoners under a strong guard in the direction of Morocco, and once more turned his attention to the stubborn defenders of the *marabout*. After yet one more summons to surrender had failed, he decided to withdraw his main force, leaving three posts with a hundred and fifty men in each to watch the tomb. Little happened during the day; the Arabs, seeing the ineffectiveness of their fire, withheld it, and the French were obliged to go sparingly with their ammunition. There was even a bombardment of stones, which the Arabs flung dexterously from a considerable distance; but a bullet or two soon put a stop to their bravado.

Another night passed. Now the tortures of hunger and thirst began to make themselves felt, heightened by taunting offers of food and water from the Arabs. The following day, under the racking heat of the sun, the Frenchmen sucked what little moisture they could from the weeds which grew inside the enclosing wall of the *marabout*. The few figs had been eaten long ago. Géreaux, who had received a slight wound, now delegated most of his duties to his lieutenant who exerted himself tirelessly to keep up the spirits of his men. But with every hour that passed, public opinion clamoured more strongly for a sortie. 'Lieutenant,' cried one soldier—and he voiced the feelings of most of the men—'are we going to stay here and be fried to death in this pan? Are we going to die horribly of starvation, or shall we die fighting? Let's get out of here while we can still walk.'

But Géreaux still had hope. During the first night in the *marabout* a Kabyle had crept up to the walls with an offer to get a note through to Lalla Maghrnia. The man had been true to his

word, but when he reached the fort he found his story discredited. It was a trap, thought Géreaux, and the note a forgery; for two fugitives from the battle-field had assured him that the *whole column* had been annihilated. The wretched Kabyle, still protesting his innocence, was soundly beaten and then thrown out of the camp. He returned to the *marabout* to claim his well-earned reward of ten francs; but no offer could now tempt him to repeat the experiment. It was then that Géreaux gave up all hope of help from outside, and agreed to attempt a sortie on the following morning.

No one slept that night. Shortly after dawn the Frenchmen slipped silently over the low wall and set off at the double towards the post which guarded the track leading to Djemmaa-Ghazaouet. The Arabs were just eating their morning bowl of *couscous*, and the attackers, taking them completely by surprise, ejected them; but fugitives gave the alarm to the other posts. The Arabs did not immediately set off after the Frenchmen, but rushed towards the *marabout* in search of booty. Géreaux, for some unaccountable reason, had not taken the three horses with him; but these had been tied up with complicated knots to cause a delay. While the Arabs were squabbling over the spoil, the French had got a good start. Géreaux led the way, supported by two soldiers. He was a stout man and his wound was hurting him a good deal; progress was inevitably slow.

For several hours they met with little opposition. Only a dozen miles separated the *marabout* from Djemmaa-Ghazaouet; ten of these had been covered, and so far the French had suffered few casualties. Once they had made a ten minutes' halt which had cost them three men. Many of the others were near breaking-point. When Chapdelaine fell, a soldier stooped to cut off one of his moustaches, a grizzly memento for relatives at home.

Now they had reached the end of the plateau; below them lay a little stream, the *Oued Ziri*, which flowed into the sea at Djemmaa-Ghazaouet. The Berber towers and one of the blockhouses were already in sight; the exhausted men had, it seemed, but to stretch out their hands to reach them—to find safety, friends, food and water. But suddenly from all sides the valley was filled with Arabs and Kabyles. ‘What a sight! In front of us, six hundred feet below in the valley, was a multitude, a vast host armed with rifles, sabres and every conceivable kind of weapon—thousands of Arabs shouting and gesticulating, awaiting a prey that was powerless to escape . . . There was no time for indecision, for 2,000 Kabyles

were bearing down on our rear. There was nothing for it but to advance over this human ant-hill, to go into this hell, to force a way through or to die.'

A trumpeter sounded a call; the notes echoed from the walls of the blockhouses, but not a finger was stirred to help the hopelessly outnumbered little band of Frenchmen in their last, desperate battle. As they fought their way forward, rocks were hurled down upon them from the heights above the valley; every shrub concealed an Arab sharpshooter. Twice the French square was broken. As the Arab fire grew in intensity, that of the French slackened till finally it ceased altogether—the last cartridge had been fired. Some of the men now threw down their rifles and fought on with cold steel.

The first blockhouse lay only a few hundred yards away; they had reached the Oued Ziri. To men deprived of water for several days the temptation to drink was almost irresistible, and many rushed to the stream's edge where they were cut to pieces; the rest were fighting in small groups, each surrounded by hundreds of natives. 'From now on it was every man for himself. On we fought, while swarms of Arabs closed in on us from all sides . . . Before us, behind us, on every side were nothing but eyes flaming with fury, the teeth of wild animals fighting over their prey, faces of demons incarnate with hatred, stretched arms and clenched hands trying by every possible means to get at us, to kill us. The air was hideous with shrieks and cries, the confusion was indescribable . . .'

Twenty men still fought on. Suddenly, when all hope seemed to have vanished, three cannon-shots were fired from the fort. The Arabs had never mastered their fear of the cannon; when the first ball fell among a crowd of natives, killing a number of them, the rest were seized with panic. Soon the whole valley was filled with fleeing figures. Like ebbing surf, the white *burnouses*, wave upon wave, recoiled over the plain. Yet even now the cowardly and incompetent Coffyn did not open the gates of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet. He had had definite information, just as Barral had, that the whole French force had been annihilated; this was a ruse; the handful of pitiful, exhausted men who were approaching might be Arabs in disguise . . . Not until they had reached the very gates did he give the order for them to be opened. Of the four hundred who had set out a week before, one corporal and sixteen men returned. Two men dropped dead of exhaustion as they reached

the gates, and several more died in hospital. Corporal Lavayssière alone retained his rifle.

Convalescence was slow, and haunted by nightmares. In 1892 Tréssy wrote: 'As for me, almost every night for fifteen years I dreamed of some scene or other of that terrible fight; and even to-day, after forty-seven years, every detail of it is as clear in my memory as it was at the time.'

We must return to the afternoon of September 23, the day on which Abd el Kader had made so many vain attempts to induce Géreaux and the brave defenders of the *marabout* to surrender. Of the eighty French prisoners taken in the first engagement, almost all were wounded. Courby de Cognord, five times hit, had owed his life to the intervention of Bou Hamidi who, seeing from his uniform that he was a person of some importance, had stayed the hand of the Arab who was about to cut his throat. Courby de Cognord was at once conducted to Abd el Kader's tent. Outside its entrance Arabs were piling French heads into two pyramids, and among these Courby de Cognord recognized with horror that of Montagnac. The Major found the Emir with his brother-in-law Mustapha ben Thami, *Khalifa* of Mascara. The prisoner was invited to sit on the ground; he was in any case scarcely able to stand.

The Emir looked at him with compassion. 'You fought well,' he said; 'no harm shall come to you.' 'My men are half naked,' answered the Frenchman, 'let them be given clothes.' The request was granted, and uniforms stripped from the dead were fetched to supplement their rags.

Early the following morning the prisoners were lined up and counted before being sent under escort to Morocco. The more seriously wounded were placed on mules, each of which carried two panniers containing French heads smeared with honey to preserve them; the remainder were obliged to travel on foot. No food was offered them all day; but in the evening they were given a few biscuits, and in exchange for the buttons off their uniforms they managed to buy some figs in the small village where they camped.

On the third day the river Moulouia was forded, and in the afternoon the prisoners reached the Emir's *deira*. The camp was some two miles in diameter, and contained about 4,000 persons, mostly women and children. Near the centre of it could be seen the green and white banner which marked the tents of Abd el

Kader's mother and his three wives. The Christians were obliged to suffer the usual insults as they passed through the camp. Reaching the tent of the Emir's mother they were met by a Negro, 'a sort of intendant of the Emir's'—no doubt Ben Fakha—who received them kindly, fetched coffee for the officers and a handkerchief to bind up Courby de Cognord's head. The other prisoners were marched about the camp until the curiosity of the women was satisfied.

The stirring events which shook Algeria during the six months that followed will be described in the next chapter; here we must pursue to its terrible climax the fate of the French prisoners. In October two hundred more were added to those already in the camp. Most of these had surrendered without a fight when they were surprised on the way from Tlemcen with an ammunition convoy; the remaining fifteen had been taken during the last stand of Géreux's men outside the walls of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet. On fête days and other suitable occasions the Frenchmen were reviewed and paraded for the entertainment of the *deira*. Time and again the site of the camp was changed, now because it was rumoured that French columns were about to attack it, now because there seemed to be signs of trouble from the Moroccan side. Courby de Cognord had been allowed to correspond with Algiers, and money and linen had been sent. The prisoners, indeed, met with little ill-treatment; but they had much to endure from heat by day and cold by night, from lice, scorpions, tarantulas, even snakes and—worst of all—from undernourishment. The shortage of food affected the whole camp, and the necessity of feeding the three hundred Frenchmen made it worse. Although several prisoners attempted escape, one man alone avoided recapture and reached the French lines in safety. In November Bou Hamidi replaced Miloud ben Arach as commander of the *deira*. He was consistently humane in his treatment of the prisoners, gave them money, and prevented the Arabs from tormenting them. Once when some natives were jeering at a small group of Christians he shouted out: 'You insult these Frenchmen because they are few and unarmed. If they had weapons they would soon know how to deal with a couple of hundred men like you.'

Early in April Bou Hamidi was replaced by Mustapha ben Thami. The stage was now set for the last fearful scene of the drama which had begun with Montagnac's foolhardy sally from Djemmaa-Ghazaouet the previous autumn. At this time the prisoners were

encamped at a point several hours' march from the *deïra*. On April 24 a message was brought to Courby de Cognord from Ben Thami: the *khalifa* invited the French officers to eat *couscous* with him in the *deïra*. The officers attempted to decline the honour, but their objections were overruled. Courby de Cognord eventually obtained permission for four private soldiers to accompany them. They set out with vague misgivings, but without any positive grounds for alarm.

That evening the three hundred prisoners were ordered to assemble near the camp, where they were lined up and divided into groups of five or six. Each group was then conducted to a separate tent where they were ordered to remain for the night. What suspicions were aroused in the various tents will never be known; but one man at least, bugler Roland, guessed that treachery was afoot. Some days before, he had chanced to come upon an Arab knife in the grass, and this he kept concealed about his person; in the tent which had been allotted to him he found an old reaping-hook. The latter he gave to one of his companions, a man named Daumat.

In that tent, at any rate, no one slept. At midnight there came the sound of feet stealthily approaching, followed by a sudden cry: it was the signal for the massacre to begin. Roland sprang to the opening of the tent just as the first Arab reached it, struck him down with his knife and rushed towards the palisade which surrounded the camp. Two Arabs seized him by the trousers as he climbed it; but the material was so ragged that it tore to shreds in their hands, and the Frenchman made off in his shirt. Soon shots were passing dangerously near him; one grazed his leg, but the rest did not touch him. Having reached the top of a small hill about three-quarters of a mile from the camp he sat down and waited to see whether any of his companions would join him. Below him the massacre was still going on. He could hear the shrieks of the victims, the wild, exultant cries of the Arabs; by the flashes of the rifle-fire he could glimpse struggling figures and the glint of knives. Then the shrieks grew less, the fire slackened; all was over.

Meanwhile one other Frenchman had succeeded in escaping—a man named Delpech. Bound hand and foot, he had been carried out into the open with a number of others to be shot. But the bullet had missed him. Having feigned to be dead, he eventually managed to free himself from his bonds, slipped out of the camp

and, swimming the river, made a dash for safety. Roland reached Lalla Maghrnia three weeks later, conducted there by a native to whom he had promised a good reward. Delpech was more than three months before he too succeeded in rejoining the French.

Only eleven prisoners now remained—the officers and men who had been removed from the camp on the afternoon of the massacre. Courby de Cognord wrote more than once to Algiers on the subject of a ransom; but Bugeaud was determined not to treat with Abd el Kader on equal terms. At length a private transaction was agreed upon, and the sum fixed at 36,000 francs.

One evening in November Courby de Cognord was summoned to drink coffee with Abd el Kader in his tent. They talked far into the night. ‘Remain with me, serve me, and I will make you great,’ pleaded the Emir. At the mention of the massacre an expression of shame and anger appeared on his face: ‘If I had been with my *deira*, your men would never have died. This perpetual war is a scourge . . .’

On November 23, after fourteen months’ captivity, the prisoners set out from the camp. Courby de Cognord rode a fine horse, the personal gift of Abd el Kader which, however, he returned to the donor on reaching the coast.

Thus ended the tragic episode of Sidi Brahim. Perhaps in conclusion it may be worthwhile to consider for a moment the responsibilities of the various actors in this bloody drama. Montagnac, in rashly disobeying orders, must take the major blame; though the feeble hesitance of Barral and the cowardly incompetence of Coffyn cannot be overlooked. The cavalry who had raised the vain hopes of Géreaux and his men were certainly not French. Barral, when he received Montagnac’s note informing him that he was marching out of Djemmaa-Ghazaouet, had at first refused to become involved in an enterprise which was strictly contrary to the orders of his superior officer. But the sounds of firing, and the pressure of his staff, had shamed him into making a gesture of assistance, and he marched out of Lalla Maghrnia. Then the firing had ceased; the massacre had begun. When news reached him that the whole force had been annihilated, he returned at once to Lalla Maghrnia, preferring to wait within the relative safety of his fort for fuller news of the fate of the foolhardy expedition.

With regard to the massacre, Bugeaud at first genuinely believed that the Emir was personally responsible; and Abd el Kader, in order to cover his *khalifa* Ben Thami, publicly shouldered the

blame. But a French agent, who was sent to Fez in July, 1846, to make investigations, stated emphatically in his report that the Emir was guiltless, adding: 'it is essential for our policy to maintain that Abd el Kader is the sole author of this crime, and to see that the rumour is believed; for it has already done him immense harm, even among his warmest supporters'. To such depths did the French sink, in order to discredit the Arab chief whom they could neither capture nor decisively defeat on the field of battle.

## CHAPTER XX

### SURRENDER.

THE brilliant success of Sidi Brahim and the cowardly surrender of the Tlemcen convoy were the cause of tremendous repercussions throughout Algeria. The various Bou Mazas were in full revolt; communications were cut, and outposts stormed; half the country was rising against the invaders. Never had the French been in such danger as in the dark hour which immediately preceded the dawn of victory.

Bugeaud had returned to France at the beginning of September (1845), leaving La Moricière in command. '*J'accours à l'incendie!*' cried the Marshal when he heard of the French disasters. Though his calmness and composure soon restored confidence in Algiers, he himself was not blind to the gravity of the situation. He saw that he must at all costs prevent the Emir from making common cause with the rebels in the Dahra.

The Marshal now had 106,000 men at his disposal—approximately one third of the whole French army. For the pursuit of the Emir he detailed eighteen columns whose task it was to scour the country, to harass him and prevent him from receiving supplies, and—above all—to attempt to capture him. The Emir, for his part, sought to fan the hundred small flames of revolt until they should be united in one gigantic blaze which would drive the Christians out of Algeria.

It would be impossible to describe in detail all the breathless pursuits and brilliant evasions, all acts of heroism and feats of endurance which crowded the months that followed. Abd el Kader performed miracles of valour, daring and resourcefulness; again and again the net seemed to close around him, yet each time he contrived to slip through its meshes. In November he advanced towards the Chélib; immediately four French columns were on his track. It had been agreed that the column which first sighted the quarry should fire a signal gun. On December 1 La Moricière surprised the Emir near Tiaret as he was superintending the emigration of some tribes. At once the warning was given, and

the three other columns were rushed to the spot; by the time they arrived, the Emir was already far away in the south. They set out in hot pursuit, only to find that he had again wriggled through the net and was in the Ouarensenis. Bugeaud, Yusuf and Saint-Arnaud 'followed in breathless haste, but their ubiquitous foe everywhere gave them the slip, and for weeks led them a fruitless dance through the valleys of the Chélib'. Once Yusuf succeeded in taking some of his equipment, but Abd el Kader and his cavalry made their escape. The Arabs seemed indefatigable. But most of the French columns were worn out; three of their commanding officers broke down completely, and two of these died soon after from the effects of the campaign.

With each day that passed, the Emir's audacity grew. In February (1846) he suddenly appeared in Kabylia where, joining forces with his *khalifa* Ben Salem, he prepared to strike at the Mitidja from the east at the very moment that the French believed themselves on his track in the Tell! Something very near panic prevailed in Algiers, where military prisoners were hurriedly dragged out of jail and formed into two battalions of militia to defend the city. Unluckily for the Arabs, a French column under General Gentil chanced to come upon Ben Salem's camp at the foot of the Djedjura. 'While engaged in midnight prayer, Abd el Kader heard the order to charge. In another moment the French were upon him. He sprang on his horse and called on his men to rally. The *chasseurs* closed round him. He fought them single-handed. Two horses were shot under him. He fought on foot.' In the darkness he made his escape, and it was only through letters found upon a dead Arab that Gentil learned that the Emir himself had been in the camp.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Bugeaud by forced marches had returned to defend Algiers.

At the beginning of March Abd el Kader held a Council of War in Kabylia at which deputies from all the Kabyle tribes were present. He hoped thereby to rouse them from their apathy. At first the majority was in favour of making common cause with him, but when news suddenly reached them that Bugeaud was advancing, the more moderate party prevailed. Once more the hunt was up.

Twice again the French seemed to have their victim firmly in

<sup>1</sup> Punch (April and July, 1846) contained scathing jokes at the expense of the French, and formulated the theory that there was no such person as Abd el Kader. : : : . . .

their grasp; each time he eluded them. But his losses, both of men and equipment, were heavy; by the end of March he was forced to admit to himself that his plans for a united revolt had miscarried. Worn out by his exertions, discouraged by his recent failures, weary of the ceaseless chase, the hunted man turned to seek a respite in the south.

On March 18 Bugeaud returned to Algiers after 'the most extensive, the most active and the most effective of all those campaigns that filled and honoured his rule in Algeria', wrote his *aide-de-camp*, Captain Trochu. 'When he entered the city in a threadbare greatcoat surrounded by a staff whose clothes were in shreds, marching at the head of a column of soldiers bronzed and emaciated, but resolute and proud in their ragged uniforms, the people's enthusiasm knew no bounds. The old Marshal thoroughly enjoyed it; at times Providence had shown him only too clearly that his reputation and career were hanging in the balance. In old age—and he was now sixty-two—a reputation once lost cannot easily be regained.'

Almost a year of relative calm succeeded the strenuous campaigns of the winter and spring. Everywhere in the south Abd el Kader found that the French had preceded him; and the tribesmen, though they offered him temporary asylum, implored him not to compromise them and bring upon them the vengeance of the Christians. 'You are like the fly that torments the bull,' they said; 'when you have provoked it, you disappear, and it is we who get gored.' In July he wearily turned his steps towards Morocco and his *deira* where, during his absence, the massacre of the French soldiers had taken place. With autumn there came to him for the first time the conviction that the fight was lost. On that evening when he talked with Courby de Cognord in his tent, the Emir had said bitterly: 'I want to make peace with France; do you think that she would agree?' 'Ask her,' answered the Frenchman; 'don't ask for too much, then it might be possible . . .'

In February (1847) Ben Salem, the last of Abd el Kader's *khalifas* active on Algerian soil, made his submission and was shipped, at his request, to the East; in April, as we have already seen, Bou Maza gave himself up to Saint-Arnaud. The end of the bitter struggle which had lasted for fifteen years was at hand.

But Bugeaud himself was not to be present for the final scene of the drama. For some time past he had realized that his career

in Africa was nearing its close. Though the Government had allowed him far more freedom of action than it had accorded his predecessors, on many occasions recently he had had serious disagreements of opinion with the authorities in Paris. In particular, his ideas about military occupation had made him many enemies at home and even among his own officers. The press was again consistently hostile—not, it must be admitted, without some provocation. It took a malicious pleasure in criticizing his actions, at the same time lavishing praise upon those of La Moricière and his other subordinates. This never failed to rouse Bugeaud to almost childish anger. He had become, said Saint-Arnaud, '*fatigué de lutter contre ces bêtes aveugles et stupides qui repoussent ses idées*'; and the Marshal himself was forced to admit that he had grown '*un peu vieux pour la rude besogne d'Afrique*'. In addition, exhausting campaigns, continual worry and responsibility, and a treacherous climate, were combining to undermine his health.

But before he left, he wanted to complete his work by the conquest of Kabylia. In May, in blatant defiance of the Government's injunctions, he overran this mountainous district in a swift campaign, taking, at small cost to his own troops, a very considerable booty. The victory, though it mitigated the offence, could not condone it, and his resignation was accepted. On May 30 he announced his departure to the people of Algiers: 'My health,' he said, 'and the situation caused by the opposition with which my views meet, make it impossible for me to continue to take charge of your destinies. I have asked the King to send me a successor . . .' A week later he sailed for France, never to return. He was replaced by the duc d'Aumale.

One would like to have been able to picture Bugeaud at Excideuil, passing in the peaceful solitude of his estate the autumn of his stormy life; but Fate willed it otherwise. In February, 1848, he was called upon to play a prominent but ineffectual part in attempting to suppress the Revolution, and a few months later he was given the command of the army of the Alps. In 1849, during the cholera epidemic which swept Paris that summer, he caught the terrible disease and within four days he was dead. The faithful Roches was with him at the end.

With each month that passed, the Sultan of Morocco had become increasingly aware of the precariousness of his position. On the one hand the French were perpetually urging him, through their

consul at Tangier, to fulfil his treaty obligations and drive the Emir out of the country; on the other, Abd el Kader was no less urgent in appealing to him by the sacred ties of Islam for help against the Christians. Abd er Rahman, though he was terrified that the French might at any moment plunge his country into war, was no less frightened of Abd el Kader who had a strong following in the eastern part of his kingdom, and who designed, so he firmly believed, to seize his throne. When it became no longer possible to sit on the fence, he chose the lesser of the two evils and made common cause with the French.

At first he confined himself to secret intrigue among the eastern tribes of his dominion. Soon, as he had hoped, Abd el Kader's *deira* began to suffer; provisions were withheld, foraging parties surprised and robbed. There was even an attempt upon the Emir's life. One night while he was reading in his tent, he heard a sound and looked up. Before him stood a tall, powerfully built Negro, a dagger in his hand. Suddenly the man dashed the weapon to the ground and threw himself at the Emir's feet. 'I was about to kill you,' he exclaimed, 'but I could not bring myself to strike. I thought I saw the halo of the Prophet round your head.' Characteristically, Abd el Kader allowed his would-be assassin to go free.

Once more the *deira* set out upon its wanderings. The Sultan, now resolved to act openly, attempted to impede its progress but was repulsed; but he took a savage revenge upon the Beni-Amer who were encouraged by his defeat to re-enter the field on the Emir's side. In November a stronger Moorish force set out to capture Abd el Kader or to drive him across the border into the waiting arms of La Moricière. Yet again the Emir appealed to Abd er Rahman; but Bou Hamidi, who volunteered to go to Fez for discussions, was refused audience, then clapped into jail, and finally made to drink poison in the state dungeons. More bad news followed: two of Abd el Kader's brothers, Sidi Mustapha and Sidi Saïd, had surrendered to the French.

But still the Emir fought on with what remained to him of his regulars—2,000 infantry and some 1,200 cavalry. On the night of December 11 he even took the offensive and attempted to terrify the superstitious Moors by driving into their camp camels and oxen bearing bundles of flaming faggots; but the Moors, forewarned of his ruse, repulsed his troops with heavy casualties.

The *deira*, harassed on all sides, now moved northwards towards the upper reaches of the Moulouia which separates Morocco from

Algeria. When Abd el Kader reached the river he found that floods had made it impassable, and for nearly a week, until the water had gone down, he was obliged night and day to ward off incessant attacks from the Moors. At last, but not without heavy loss of his heroic cavalry, the whole *deira* was safely conveyed across the stream into French territory.

On the eastern bank, the pathetic little band of Arabs, men, women and children, halted while scouts were sent out to discover the disposition of the French troops. It was raining heavily. Abd el Kader in the loneliness of his tent was reciting the Koran; once again the fervour of his faith was giving him strength to triumph over adversity.

The scouts returned with the news that the Emir dreaded yet half expected—every pass into the hills was closely guarded. He at once rode out with a handful of cavalry to verify their report; they were greeted with shots from the French outposts. Returning to his camp, he held a Council of War.

He began by reminding his followers of the oath which they had taken in 1839 never to abandon him, and of the vow he himself had then made to lead them to the end. He would still lead them if they wished it, he said; but what could they do? Should they try to force a passage into the mountains for the *deira*? It was impossible. Should they abandon their women and children and attempt to slip through the French net into the Sahara? Or should they submit?

'Let the women and children, ours and yours, perish,' they answered, 'so long as you are safe and able once more to fight the battles of God. But you are our leader; fight or surrender as you will, and we will follow wherever you choose to lead.'

'Believe me,' cried Abd el Kader, 'the struggle is over. We must resign ourselves. God is our witness that we have fought as long as we were able. If He has not given us the victory, it is because He has thought fit that this land should belong to the Christians. It matters little whether or not I remain in the country. What more can I do? Can I renew the war? the tribes are tired of fighting, and would no longer obey me; I would only expose them to further suffering. We must submit; but let us rather surrender to the French who have fought us than to the Moors who have betrayed us. I will ask the French to grant a safe-conduct to a Moslem country for myself, my family, and those of you who choose to follow me.'

Some of the Arabs expressed a doubt as to whether the French would keep such a promise if they gave it. 'Do not be afraid,' said Abd el Kader; 'Ben Salem's request was granted. If they pledge their word they will keep it; if they refuse, then we can discuss what is to be done.'

Night was coming on. Into the storm, which every minute grew fiercer, two trusted messengers set out for the nearest French outpost to ask for the *aman*. Bou Khouia, in command of the *spahis*, received them, and returned with them under an escort to the Arab camp. After they had seen Abd el Kader, they set out once more in search of La Moricière.

The French general has described the pathetic scene which followed: 'Bou Khouia had spoken with the Emir who had handed him a piece of paper to which he had attached his seal; the wind, the rain and the darkness had prevented him from writing anything. He asked me for the *aman* for himself and his followers. It was equally impossible for me to write on such a night, and I had not my seal with me. The men insisted on my giving them something to prove that they had spoken to me; I gave them my sword and Major Bazaine's seal, together with a verbal promise of the most solemn kind that the *aman* would be granted. The two emissaries asked that Bou Khouia might return with them, and I sent him with four of his *spahis*. All this was done while we were marching, for I wanted to reach the approaches to the Guerbous Pass before daybreak.'

Then came another blow: while this tragedy was being enacted in the French lines, the Kabyles had fallen upon the *deira* and stripped it bare. Sick and wounded, women and children, lay half naked, unprotected against the cold and the driving rain.

The following day Bou Khouia and Abd el Kader's emissaries returned to the French camp with a letter from the Emir asking for written confirmation of his promise. It concluded: 'We should like you to send us a positive guarantee, one that can in no way be modified, that we shall be conveyed either to Alexandria or to Acre, and nowhere else.'

La Moricière at once replied: 'The son of our King (may God protect him) orders me to grant you the *aman* for which you have asked, and to arrange for you to be sent from Djemmaa-Ghazaouet to Alexandria or Acre. You will not be sent elsewhere . . . You may count upon my word; it is definite . . . I am sure that all those who wish to go with you will be allowed to do so.' At the

same time the general wrote to the duc d'Aumale: 'I felt obliged to make commitments; I did so with the fullest confidence that your Royal Highness and the Government would ratify them . . .'

The promise having been solemnly given, Abd el Kader hesitated no longer. On the morning of December 23 he set out with those of his followers who had chosen exile with him, and reached the French lines at Sidi Brahim. Here, on the spot where two years before, he had won his most spectacular victory, he was received by Colonel Montauban and his cavalry 'with all the respect, sympathy and consideration due to his exalted rank, to the recollection of his past glorious deeds, and to the spectacle of his present heavy and severe misfortune'. He looked for a moment at the French cavalry as they paraded swaggeringly past him: 'If I had had men like yours,' he said to Montauban bitterly, 'I should be in Fez now.'

La Moricière had not yet arrived, and Abd el Kader asked permission to enter the little *marabout* to pray. Leave being given, he dismounted, took off his sword and handed it to one of his attendants. His military career was over; hitherto he had devoted his life to God and his country, from now on it was to be consecrated to God alone.

When La Moricière arrived, accompanied by Cavaignac, the Emir repeated the submission he had made to Montauban, and set out with them for Djemmaa-Ghazaouet (already renamed Nemours) where the duc d'Aumale had just landed. The latter had refused to allow the wildness of the storm to delay his departure from Oran. Abd el Kader was presented to the Prince, whom he saluted with the respect that custom demanded from the conquered to the victor. 'Would that I could have done sooner, that which I am doing to-day,' he said after a moment's hesitation, 'but I awaited the hour destined by God. The general has given me his word, and I trust him; I am not afraid of its being broken by the son of a great king like the King of France.'

When the Prince had confirmed the promise made by La Moricière, Abd el Kader, pleading extreme exhaustion, asked leave to withdraw. D'Aumale also retired—to compose his report for the Minister for War. 'A great event has just taken place,' he wrote, 'Abd el Kader is in our camp! This is a matter of immense importance, and more than most of us had dared to hope for. It is impossible to describe the tremendous sensation that it has made among the local tribes, and it will have the same effect

all over Algeria . . . I have ratified the pledge given by General de la Moricière; I am confident that His Majesty's Government will confirm it.'

All night long the French officers celebrated their victory; near-by, from the tent set aside for the Emir, came the bitter sound of half-stifled sobs.

Next morning the official presentation took place in the garden of the commandant's house. D'Aumale, who had just reviewed his troops, greeted Abd el Kader courteously. The latter, dressed in a simple *burnous* and stripped of the few insignia of rank that he had been accustomed to wear, dismounted and led his horse forward to the Prince as a sign of submission. 'I offer you this horse,' he said, 'the last which I have ridden. It has been a great favourite of mine, but now we must part company. It is a token of my gratitude; may it always carry you in safety and happiness.' 'I accept it,' answered the Prince, 'as homage paid to France, whose protection will henceforth be extended towards you, and as a sign that the past is forgotten.'

On Christmas Day Abd el Kader, his family, and eighty-eight of his followers who had chosen to go into exile with him, set sail from Nemours. The Emir's personal goods—his tents, horses, mules and camels—had already been sold by the French authorities for 6,000 francs.<sup>1</sup> La Moricière accompanied the Emir on board, and generously handed him the sum of 4,000 francs, in exchange for which the latter presented the general with his sword.

D'Aumale, as he sailed for Oran, looked back wistfully upon the stirring events which had crowded the last two days. He thought of the great victory that France had won, of the prospects it opened for the French colony; but above all, he remembered the calm, simple dignity of the defeated Arab chief. From the harbour of Mers-el-Kebir, the Prince wrote another letter to the Minister for War, begging him to see that the promises which he had made would be faithfully kept. 'I have just taken leave of Abd el Kader,' he concluded. 'I cannot conceal from Your Excellency how deeply moved I was by his dignity and simplicity. He had played so great a part, and now he has fallen so low. He uttered no complaint, not a single word of regret! When he spoke, it was only to recommend to my care those who had served him, and to assure me that

<sup>1</sup> 'But even this paltry sum was afterwards only doled out to him in instalments, and a strict investigation was even instituted as to the manner in which each instalment was disbursed.'

from now onwards he thought only of peace. I have promised him that the past will be completely forgotten.'

History, as d'Ideville<sup>1</sup> points out, had repeated itself: nearly two thousand years earlier the elusive Jugurtha, harassed and pursued by the Roman Legions under Marius, had been betrayed by Bocchus, King of Mauretania (Morocco); and when Marius, spurned and calumniated, had been recalled home, it was the young and popular Sulla who received the submission of the proud Numidian by the banks of the river Mulucha (Moulouïa).

<sup>1</sup> D'Ideville, Comte H.: *Le Maréchal Bugeaud* (1881, 1882).

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CAGED HAWK

'I WAS told that the ship would touch at Toulon, and I readily gave my consent,' explained the Emir later. 'I saw nothing suspicious in this circumstance, which I concluded to be necessary before setting out on the long voyage eastwards.' But at Toulon, where no preparations had been made to receive them, the Arabs were hustled on shore; and an hour later Abd el Kader and his family found themselves behind the iron bars of Fort Lamalque, and his companions in the equally inhospitable surroundings of Fort Malbousquet.

In vain the Emir protested; he was informed that it would take time for negotiations to be made with the Turkish or Egyptian Government. In vain he cried that he had surrendered of his own free will, that France had pledged her word that he would be conveyed to Alexandria or Acre—and now he and his companions lay caged in a French prison; his voice rang out unanswered in the cold, dank cell. But down the years came the echo of another and a greater voice, a voice which had cried out in anguish from a cabin on board the *Bellerophon*: 'I am not a prisoner of war! . . . I came on board the *Bellerophon* of my own free will, after negotiation with the commander . . . The tricolor was still waving over Rochefort and Bordeaux . . . If I have fallen into a trap, your Government has acted dishonourably and has dishonoured your flag . . . I gave the Prince Regent the chance of doing the finest action of his life. I have been the greatest of his country's foes, and I have paid you the highest compliment in the world by voluntarily entrusting myself to your protection . . . What you are proposing will be an everlasting disgrace to the whole British nation . . .

While the Arabs languished in jail, France considered their fate. 'I cannot understand what there is to discuss,' wrote Cavaignac from Oran. 'There is no choice. Abd el Kader is not a prisoner; the way to the south was open to him. But he prefers to trust what he calls the word of France. It would tarnish her reputation

if she were now to go back upon it.' On January 17, during a debate in the Upper Chamber, the Prince de la Moskowa spoke up fearlessly in the Emir's defence: 'Since Abd el Kader did not surrender unconditionally, we are obliged in his case to respect the rights of man, or incur the censure of history . . . One thing *must* come first—the honouring of our pledged word.' (Applause.) He added that he thought the risk involved in deporting the Emir to a Mohammedan country had in any case been exaggerated. General Fabvier and M. Merilhon were both indignant that hypothetical dangers should be weighed in the balance against the country's honour.

But Trézel, the Minister for War, had a plan, though it had the double disadvantage of being both impracticable and dishonourable: Abd el Kader was to be tricked (only it was called 'prevailed upon, by means of persuasion') into releasing the French from the promise which they had made to him. Guizot, President of the Council, had a further suggestion to make: should the Emir refuse, he could be sent to Alexandria and kept there in a house rented by France and guarded by French agents. 'His Majesty's Government,' he added ominously, 'will know how to reconcile what is due to the honour of an engagement entered into with a vanquished enemy, with what the interests of the country demand.' It was all too clear that the Government had little intention of honestly fulfilling its commitment. Though an emissary was actually sent to Mehemet Ali to inquire whether he would harbour the Emir, a comment in *La Presse*—'It is hoped that he will refuse to receive him'—suggests that the request was not really intended to succeed.

The delicate task of 'persuasion' was entrusted to General Daumas, formerly the French agent at Mascara. As a soldier, he was bound to obey orders, though he did so with extreme reluctance. Having explained his position to Trézel, he set out for Toulon on his uncongenial mission.

The Emir greeted Daumas warmly, and was soon talking to him without constraint, simply and trustingly. 'I could have reached the Sahara,' he explained, 'but I wanted my people to be spared further misfortune. I chose to trust the word of France that I would be conveyed to Alexandria or Acre on my way to Mecca.'

Daumas pointed out that this was the first time that any mention had been made of Mecca. The Emir replied that it was the natural goal of every Moslem. 'What is there to offer in exchange for

Mecca?' he asked; 'worldly honours, pleasures, wealth? You know, Daumas, how I despise them. You saw me when I was powerful, receiving the homage of those who have since betrayed me. A tent for shelter, the simplest food, the plainest clothes, my arms, and the Holy War—those are the only things I have wanted from the world. My heart and my mind were full of things very far removed from human vanities. Were you to take my *burnous*', he said, lifting it up as he spoke, 'and fill it with all the diamonds and riches in the world, I would fling it into the blue waters that lie spread out at our feet. I tell you again, my only desire is to go to Mecca to study the Holy Books and to adore God, and to be buried there after I have visited the tomb of Our Lord Mohammed at Medina. My part is played. I have given you my word. Were I free, and learned that all your men were dead, that there were only women left in Algiers, I would not fight you again. Daumas, you see me alive—but none the less I am dead!'

Daumas listened in silence to those proud, pathetic words. He knew them to be true; he knew that, come what might, Abd el Kader would never again draw his sword against France. He could not bring himself to tell the prisoner that Guizot and Trézel did not consider themselves bound to fulfil the engagement made by d'Aumale and La Moricière.

Next day, without any preamble, Daumas forced himself to speak. Abd el Kader was dumbfounded. 'What!' he cried, his eyes blazing with anger; 'La Moricière's promise, ratified by the French King's son before all the world, will not be kept? I cannot believe it! Did not Roches and the Consul at Tangier make me the same offer only the other day? And now I am told that no promise was made! Well then,' he added naïvely, 'let them, in accordance with international law, put me back exactly where I was when the promise was made which led to my surrender. They'll see whether it's easy to catch me! How many times have I not been surrounded by your armies, and yet managed to slip through your fingers! Remain in France! Why, we do not speak your language, we do not share your customs, your laws, your religion. Your women even laugh at our women's clothes! Cannot you understand—this is *death!*' Once more came the echo of a distant voice: 'St. Helena will kill me in three months. I am used to riding twenty leagues a day; what can I do on a little rock at the world's end? I will not go! . . . If your Government wishes to kill me, that can be done here . . .'

A painful silence succeeded this sudden outburst; then, in calmer tones, Abd el Kader repeated the promises he had made the evening before. ‘But what is the use?’ he added; ‘I am in your hands. You are the knife, I am the flesh—cut me as you will; I have no choice but to submit.’

‘Work, O my slave, and I will help you,’ answered Daumas, quoting from the Koran.

‘What do you want me to do?’ asked the Emir. ‘I do not know your customs; there is no one to guide me through the dark waters that encompass me.’

This was the moment for which Daumas had been waiting. ‘Write to the French King,’ he replied. ‘Place your fate and your future entirely in his hands. He is generous and understanding. Later, perhaps, when the time is right, he will do what you wish. Trust me and do this; it is the only thing that can save you.’

The letter was written and rewritten many times before Abd el Kader expressed himself satisfied, for Daumas, whose help he had asked, had been slowly and cautiously manipulating the words to his own purpose. Among the rich oriental imagery, the cries for mercy and justice, and the demand for a personal interview, stood one significant phrase—‘I place myself entirely in your hands...’ Daumas’s evil mission had been accomplished.

The interpreter Rousseau immediately made a translation which was handed to Daumas. Meanwhile Abd el Kader, probably on the advice of his brother-in-law Mustapha, had begun to doubt the wisdom of the step he had taken, and now demanded the letter back. ‘It has already been sent off,’ lied Daumas, and hurried away to arrange for its dispatch. ‘As you see,’ he wrote in an accompanying note, ‘I did not return it to him.’

Daumas, who had established himself in Fort Lamalgue in order to be near the Emir, visited the prisoner every day; and his notes (many of which have been used by Bellemare) give a valuable picture of the great Arab in the bitterness of his captivity. One January day the Emir said to him: ‘The best way to kill an enemy who is a man of high principles, is to pardon him.’ Had not Napoleon said as much: ‘One should never be afraid of doing justice to an enemy; it is always honourable, and sometimes wise.’ But there were times when the Emir was silent and reserved. Was there, perhaps, something in the Frenchman’s manner which betrayed the dishonourable role that he was being forced to play? In a short parable the Emir explained his feelings:

"They were reproaching the cock for being uncivilized. "Your behaviour," they said, "is most ungrateful and ill-mannered. You are well fed, you have all the pleasures of life, you are admired; yet when your master comes to pet you, you run away in a fright. The falcon, on the other hand, who has always lived in a wild state, becomes used to man in a few days; he does not want to leave him again, and he responds to kind treatment." The cock replied: "If he had seen as many of his kind as I have of mine, killed and roasted on the spit, he would do as I do."

On February 3 new instructions arrived from Trézel. After congratulating Daumas on getting the better of any one as 'crafty and deceitful' as Abd el Kader, the Minister for War gave orders that the prisoner was to be given the choice between virtual captivity in Alexandria and a life of luxury and comfort in France. Daumas was skilful enough in the use of words; he sketched for the Emir a glowing picture of what his future might become in a fine château in the country. He would have his private mosque, his baths, his horses. No prying eyes would disturb his privacy; but when he chose, he could ride or hunt across the rolling plains and rich forests of France. He would be the honoured guest of France. And the alternative? A house in Alexandria watched day and night, spied upon by French and Egyptian agents, a virtual prison.

For a few seconds the Emir considered Trézel's offer; then he answered stoutly: 'I have no hesitation in choosing Alexandria, even with the conditions you impose. I shall find there the doctors of our Law, people of our own religion, wearing the same clothes as we do, having the same manners and customs; finally, there will be a Mohammedan cemetery to receive the bodies of those whom God may call to Him.' Daumas, who had known that no other answer was possible, in due course reported his failure to Trézel.

Early in February the Chamber of Deputies met. La Moricière spoke frankly and honourably: the Emir, he admitted, had surrendered voluntarily. 'It has been suggested,' he continued, 'that we should have fought on, and not come to terms. If we had fought on, I should have taken his convoy; I should have been able to report to you that I had captured Abd el Kader's tent, his carpet, one of his wives, perhaps one of his *khalifas*; but he himself and his cavalry would have made good their escape to the desert . . . If you think he is less dangerous in the desert than at Alexandria,

it is not too late to send him there. There is nothing he would like better (laughter). But we have already seen Abd el Kader alone in the desert, stripped, abandoned by all but a handful of faithful cavalry—and we all know what happened.'

Guizot rose to discuss the practical difficulty of sending Abd el Kader to the East. He could not be sent to Acre, he said, because Turkey did not recognize the French conquest of Algeria.<sup>1</sup> 'But we are negotiating with the Pasha of Egypt,' he added, 'firstly, to ask if he will receive Abd el Kader (we cannot, of course, compel him to do so), and secondly, to secure from him a guarantee of supervision which I will see is of a kind that safeguards us completely.'

We are not surprised to learn that the negotiations broke down.

Abd el Kader's first care at Fort Lamalque had been to sustain and comfort his companions. Characteristically, he took upon himself the whole blame for the misfortune that had overwhelmed them. Though they continued to treat him as their Sultan, he himself preferred to consider them as a family of which he was the chief. What he had, he shared among them. 'In the position I am now in,' he told them, 'I must do as my ancestors did. I can no longer say "*my horse, my burnous and my goods*"; but "*our horse, our burnous and our goods*".' Yet though he gave gladly, he would take nothing from others. One bitter February day Daumas found him without a fire, half frozen with cold; his supply of wood was finished.

'Why do you not take some from your companions?' asked the Frenchman.

'Poor fellows!' replied Abd el Kader; 'instead of taking theirs, I would that it were in my power to give them more.'

'You are not, then, like those great chiefs who seem to take pleasure in ruining their people?'

'Had I been like them,' came the gentle answer, 'would the Arabs have continued the fight as they did; would they have

<sup>1</sup> To this, the Earl of Winchelsea adds the scathing comment: 'To say "we will not take you to St. Jean d'Acre because that place belongs to the Porte, which does not recognize our Algerian possessions", is about as reasonable as to say "we will not take you to St. Jean d'Acre, because it belongs to the Turks, and they have no Italian Opera in the winter".' Maidstone, Visct.; afterwards Earl of Winchelsea. Introduction to *Abd el Kader, A Poem* (1851).

sacrificed everything, their fortunes, their corn, their flocks, to follow me? . . . Man is a mixture of silk and iron; if he becomes dependent on luxury, soft living and rich food, then the silk predominates and he is no longer of any use. If, on the other hand, he spurns all worldly pleasures, the iron predominates; then no hardship is too great for him to bear, no task too difficult for him to accomplish.'

The dreary month of February dragged slowly on. Sometimes there came a ray of hope, as on the day when Colonel de Beaufort, d'Aumale's *aide-de-camp*, arrived from Paris with the news that the King had sworn to stand by his son's promise. Moreover, the rumours which reached Fort Lamalque of the debates in the two Chambers were not wholly discouraging, for there was still talk of negotiating with Egypt. But on February 9 Daumas found the prisoners in the deepest gloom. It was the Feast of *Mouloud*, the anniversary of the Prophet's birth and a day of rejoicing throughout the length and breadth of Islam; yet there could be no happiness for the exiles captive in a land of unbelievers.

Though permission had been given for the prisoners to drive in the town or the neighbouring countryside, for the most part they preferred to remain within the stone walls of Fort Lamalque. Once—more out of politeness than curiosity, says Daumas—a visit was made to the naval establishment in Toulon; but the gaping faces in the streets disconcerted the Arabs, and the experiment was not repeated.

Distinguished visitors flocked to see the celebrated prisoner, and more than one artist applied for leave to paint his portrait. To Daumas's surprize, the Emir made no objection. 'Statues in gold, silver or copper are against our Law,' he explained; 'they are idols. But a painting is permissible.' Horace Vernet, who had already recorded on his giant canvases the French victories in Algeria, was chosen for the purpose.

With him in the fortress Abd el Kader had his three wives: his cousin Lalla Kheïra, and two women of mixed blood—Aïcha and Embarka. Lalla Kheïra occupied a position of distinction, and the other wives waited on her at table. The Emir's three sons, Mohammed, Mahi ed Din and Abdallah, his daughter Yamina, and his mother Lalla Zohra, also shared his captivity. Zohra was now seventy-six years old. Her days were devoted to prayer and her nights to weeping; her only desire was to pass the closing years of her life in Mecca. Abd el Kader, like many great men, loved

and revered his mother above everything in the world. Among his other relatives in the prison was a deaf, white-haired old *marabout* named Sidi Abd er Rahman, his father's cousin and close friend. There was also Mustapha ben Thami, the Emir's brother-in-law and former *khalifa*. He refused to have any contact with the Christians and, in fulfilment perhaps of a vow, had dyed his beard red with henna for the duration of his captivity.

'The days passed calmly, if not happily, at Toulon,' Bellemare tells us. 'Abd el Kader rose at daybreak, made his ablutions, recited the *Fedjeur* (dawn) prayer. Then he greeted his mother and spent a few minutes with his family. For the next hour he rested, while his companions came in to pay their respects. After they had returned to their own rooms, the Emir's two eldest sons, Mohammed and Mahi cd Din, repeated to him the lessons they had learned from their teacher. Lunch was at eleven o'clock, followed by the *Dhohor* (midday) prayer at which all were present. From midday to three o'clock visitors of importance were received, and at three o'clock came the *Aasseur* (afternoon) prayer which all the Arabs attended. This was followed by a reading from the Koran, given either by Mustapha ben Thami or the Emir himself. At five o'clock Abd el Kader again visited his family until it was time for the *Moghreb* (sunset) prayer, also held in common. Then the *talebs* (scholars) met for discussion until the *Eucha* (supper) prayer at eight o'clock. The evening meal followed, and afterwards Abd el Kader chatted with his particular friends until ten or eleven o'clock.'

Day by day Daumas jotted down in his notebook his conversations with the Emir.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes they would discuss the African campaigns, sometimes questions of religion, philosophy or politics; at other times Abd el Kader would reveal his enormous knowledge of Algeria and the various races which inhabited it. Daumas fell completely under the spell of the man whom he had helped to betray: 'He is both warrior and saint,' he wrote; 'war failed him, and now he seeks consolation in religion.'

Religion was a favourite topic. 'The Christians admit that Jesus modified the word of Moses. Why do they deny that Mohammed, the last of the Prophets, could modify the word of Jesus?' Abd el Kader inquired one day. 'You are inconsistent,'

<sup>1</sup> It has not been possible for me to obtain access to the private papers left by General Daumas. Many extracts are quoted by Bellemare, and for the remainder I am indebted to Colonel Azan.

he added, when Daumas pointed out that Jesus was the Son of God. 'If God had a son, He must also have had a father. Then tell me who he was.'

On another occasion Daumas asked the Emir his opinion of the French army. 'We found your soldiers brave, forbearing and well trained in the art of war,' he replied. 'But since our resources, our arms, and in particular our organization, are far inferior to yours, only nations who are equipped and prepared as you are can pass judgement on its worth.'

Abd el Kader denied the popular belief current among Europeans that the Arabs worshipped bodily strength. 'We prefer a little and brave man to a coward with splendid physique,' he said; 'we call the latter a lion's skin on a cow's back.' Heredity counted for much. 'Take a thorn branch, plant it, water it with rose-water even—and it remains a thorn. But plant a palm branch, neglect it if you like; yet it will grow into a tree which bears dates.'

Daumas lost no opportunity of asking Abd el Kader's opinion as to the best way of dealing with the native population of Algeria. To his inquiry as to how the country should best be governed, the Emir gave advice which, had it been followed, might have spared its people much misery: 'Do as I did; govern only with the Law in your hand, then you will succeed.'

While the days passed uneventfully at Fort Lamalgue, in Paris the storm clouds were gathering. On February 23, 1848, Louis-Philippe was still King of France. Four days later, travelling as 'Mr. Smith, uncle of the English Consul at Havre', he was sitting with his consort, shivering and exhausted, upon the inhospitable deck of the Newhaven packet. France was once more a Republic.

The following day Abd el Kader heard the bitter news. He saw in a flash how his own future was prejudiced by the advent of a Government with which he had no bond. How could he hope for generosity when he had failed to obtain common justice? To those who had closely followed the course of events in France, the sudden crash of the Monarchy came as little of a surprise; to Abd el Kader, who believed it to be founded upon a rock, the shock was stupendous. 'Behold,' he said to Daumas, 'a sultan who was everywhere esteemed, great and powerful, who had made alliances with other sovereigns, who had a large family to perpetuate his line, who was renowned for his wisdom and experience. Three days have sufficed to overthrow him. Am I not right in my conviction

that there is no other real force, no truth and no reality, but in the will of God. Believe me, this world is a carcass; only dogs quarrel over it.'

A Republic was to Abd el Kader an incomprhensible form of government. 'A body,' he said, 'cannot move without a head.' When Daumas explained that there would be not one head, but five, the Emir answered: 'I predict that there will be not five but thirty-five million—and that is a great deal too many!'

During March, Emile Ollivier, Commissary-General of the Provisional Government, paid two visits to Fort Lamalgue. Abd el Kader's noble bearing in adversity deeply impressed him. 'Is there anything you want?' he asked the prisoner. 'Only my liberty,' came the proud answer. 'Would you and your chiefs sign an oath, sworn upon the Koran, by which you solemnly declare that you will never return to Algeria, or involve yourselves, directly or indirectly, in her affairs?' 'If my hands were not sufficient,' answered the Emir, 'I would sign with my eyes.'

Ollivier returned to Paris bearing a letter from Abd el Kader to the members of the Provisional Government and a sworn declaration never again to interfere in Algeria. The Frenchman now became a warm supporter of Abd el Kader's cause. 'It is certain,' he wrote to Arago, the Minister for War, 'that to keep Abd el Kader is to kill him. He never stirs from his cell, for, as he told me, when there is sorrow in the heart one cannot go abroad. It is certain, too, that it is our breach of faith that is killing him. The Republican Government would do a magnificent deed in the sight of the whole world by sending Abd el Kader to Mecca . . . by carrying out a promise made by a King's son and betrayed by the Monarchy. Our honour—our most precious asset—is at stake. I am personally convinced of Abd el Kader's sincerity. His oath, which is known throughout the length and breadth of Algeria, makes it impossible for him to attempt a *coup*, because he would thereby lose that reputation for integrity which has been his whole strength. France is strong enough not to fear such an enemy. She will never be strong enough to face the reproaches which will rise day by day from the tomb of an enemy we betrayed.'

Ollivier's visit brought a momentary renewal of hope to the prisoners at Fort Lamalgue, for it seemed to them that the official acceptance of a sworn promise must be the immediate prelude to

freedom. But as the days dragged by, and no word came from Paris, a wild despair overcame them. Daumas begged Abd el Kader to have patience, but the Arab cried out angrily:

'How can you be surprised if my resignation sometimes falters before the immensity of my misfortune? My followers, my own family even, are in despair; my mother and my wives weep day and night and can no longer bring themselves to believe the words of hope that I am obliged to hold out to them. What am I saying? it is not only the women, but the men themselves who are weeping—not on their own account, but for their families. Yesterday my brother-in-law Mustapha came to me in tears to tell me that his wife—my own sister!—was asking to leave him and return to Mascara. . . . And *I* am the cause of all these misfortunes! . . . Is there no tribunal in France, especially charged to hear the complaints of the oppressed? If there is, then take me before it. Summon all your Doctors of Law, and I will undertake to convince them of my rights . . .'

On March 30 the blow fell. Changarnier, on his way through Toulon to take up the post of Governor-General of Algeria, visited Fort Lamalgue and informed the Emir that, owing to the instability of affairs in France and the consequent reduction of French forces in Algeria, it was impossible to order his release. The Republic considered itself bound by no obligation. It found Abd el Kader a prisoner; a prisoner he must remain.

'Then I am betrayed!' cried the Emir in the wildness of his grief. 'If you keep us here,' he said, turning to Daumas, 'I tell you that many of us will take our own lives.'

'That is a deadly sin in your religion, as it is in mine,' answered Daumas.

'That is true,' replied Abd el Kader, 'but there is one circumstance which allows it—when a Moslem is forced to renounce his faith.'

'But no one is forcing you to do that.'

'To-day, no,' came the reply; 'but will it be the same to-morrow? The promise of the French commanders has been broken; how can I be sure that, sooner or later, that which I hold most sacred will not be taken from me?'

As Changarnier set sail for Algiers, Daumas took up his pen to report to Paris. 'The place is cramped,' he informed the Minister for War. 'These people are used to plenty of exercise and an open air life. Sooner or later they will all fall ill.' He pleaded that

they should be given more suitable accommodation. 'Common humanity,' he concluded, 'demands it.'

Two or three days later thirty-five more Arabs arrived at Fort Lamalgue. They included the Emir's three brothers—Si el Hossein, Si Saïd and Si Mustapha—who had come voluntarily to France to join Abd el Kader's caravan to the East, and a sixteen-year-old daughter of the Emir who had become feeble-minded as the result of a shock received in childhood. Under the mocking gaze of the people of Toulon, guarded by a posse of *gendarmes*, they climbed on foot the steep, sandy pathway to the fortress. 'As they crossed over the drawbridge, it was heartbreaking to hear the cries of anguish of the Arab women—women who had once occupied high positions in their own country, and who now filed past between two rows of *gendarmes*, pursued by a pestering and inquisitive crowd.'

There was a pathetic scene when the four brothers met in Abd el Kader's cell. 'This is the final blow,' cried Abd el Kader. 'I am a prisoner, in defiance of International Law; and now my family, which was free, is lured into a vile trap in order that it may share my fate. I would never have believed it possible that the French nation could sink so low as to snare men in a trap, as children snare little birds . . . This is treachery added to treachery!' 'Why should they share my fate?' he asked Daumas. 'These are *marabouts*, men of peace who have never fought against you, who took no part in our struggle. A chaplet was the only rifle they ever had.'

Daumas was silent. He knew that at Pau, at that very moment, workmen were busy cementing iron bars in front of the windows to convert the old castle of the Navarres into a cage to hold the Arab prisoners.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PAU AND AMBOISE

WHEN Abd el Kader heard that he was to be sent to Pau, those who were with him ‘saw the iron enter his soul’. In vain it was explained to him that the change was a ‘*nécessité de convenance*’ which in no way prejudiced the question of his liberation; in vain the Ministry wrote to reassure him: ‘the castle is beautiful and spacious; the mild climate and lovely countryside will remind you of Algeria; you will be the guest rather than the prisoner of the Republic’. At first a deep despondency seized him; then despair gave place to fury. ‘You will only tear me away from here by force,’ he shouted. ‘Put ropes round our necks, round those of our wives and our children, and drag us through the streets, over stones, through brambles, till our bodies are in shreds! We will be an example to the whole world, that all people, everywhere, may know what lies in store for those who trust you in the future!’

But after two days of coaxing and cajoling, Abd el Kader at last agreed to comply with the order. Only his own family and his servants—seventy-seven persons in all—were to be taken to Pau; the remaining Arabs would be held as political prisoners on the Iles Sainte-Marguerite. On April 23 Abd el Kader and those who were of his party set out ‘in a hackney-coach and several omnibuses’ for the harbour, where a ship was waiting to carry them to Cette. From there the journey was continued by canal to Toulouse, and finally by coach to Pau.

It must be admitted that Pau was in every way a more congenial spot than Fort Lamalque, and from the French point of view it had the advantage of being inland, and more easily guarded than Toulon against the machinations of English agents who, it was rumoured, were contemplating a *coup de main* to rescue the Arabs. The castle, once the seat of the Viscounts of Béarn and birthplace of Henry IV, was, as the French said, spacious and attractive; the climate was almost sub-tropical; and there was no lovelier view in all France than that of the endless chain of the Pyranees seen from the castle terrace. But to Abd el Kader these attractions meant

nothing; he saw the iron bars across the windows, he saw the armed sentries at the gates; Pau, like Toulon, was to him a prison and nothing more.

It took Abd el Kader some time to become reconciled to his new surroundings. At first he was irritable and fractious, and found intentional insult where, in all probability, none was meant. On the first night he refused to go to bed, because his own bed had curtains while his mother's had none. Captain Boissonnet, who had succeeded Daumas as interpreter, seems to have done everything in his power to smooth over the difficulties that arose, and soon the Arabs became more resigned to their fate. Distinguished visitors came from all parts of France to pay their respects to the illustrious prisoner, and all were charmed by his courtesy and dignity. Though he never failed to put forward his own case and his right to freedom, he amazed them by his attempts to find extenuating circumstances for those who had dealt so unjustly towards him.

Among his visitors was a M. Bugnard, the son of an old French soldier, who presented him with a ring containing a fragment of the stone of Napoleon's tomb. Boissonnet and Daumas, in their conversations with Abd el Kader, had already fired him with enthusiasm for the Napoleonic legend, and the gift gave him the greatest pleasure. 'What you offer me,' he said as he accepted the ring, 'is more than a precious stone, it is a stone without price . . . Perhaps it will change my luck.'

At first the Emir received all those who asked to see him, but before long he was obliged to restrict the number of his visitors. He always found time, however, to talk with one or two particular friends who lived in the town. Among these may be mentioned a certain Comtesse de B—— in whom he found combined '*les grâces de l'esprit et les perfections du cœur*', and with whom he continued for many years to exchange letters. There was even, on one occasion, a small dinner party in the castle, at which the Emir himself poured the champagne for his guests. Nor were the women prisoners forgotten, for some of the Sisters of Mercy from Pau came at Dupuch's suggestion to see Zohra, and by their simple goodness won the affection of both her and Lalla Kheira.

Dupuch was also among those who made the pilgrimage to Pau. Daumas, hearing of his intended visit, wrote to him: 'So you are going to see the illustrious prisoner of the Château of Pau. Oh! you will certainly not regret your journey. You knew Abd el Kader at the height of his power, at a time when all Algeria, as

it were, acknowledged his rule. Well, you will find him even greater and more extraordinary in adversity than he was in prosperity . . . You will find him gentle, simple, affectionate, modest, resigned, never complaining; excusing his enemies—even those at whose hands he may yet have much to suffer—and never allowing evil to be spoken of them in his presence. Moslems and Christians alike, however justly he might have complained of them, have found his forgiveness. The former, he maintains, were the victims of circumstance; the latter were actuated by the safety and honour of the flag under which they fought. In going to console so noble and exalted a character you will add yet another work of sanctity to those by which your life is already distinguished.' In Dupuch Abd el Kader found a man after his own heart, and in his letters to the Christian Bishop the Moslem always felt that he could write without restraint. In one he confesses: 'As you may have discovered in the mirrors of our conversation, I was not born to be a warrior. It seems to me that I ought not to have been one, even for a single day; yet I have borne arms all my life. How mysterious are the workings of Providence! It was only through an entirely unforeseen sequence of events that I suddenly found myself so completely uprooted from the career to which I was born and bred, the life I had chosen and which, as you well know, I long to resume . . .'

But though Abd el Kader found in the kindness and attention of his friends at Pau a degree of consolation which he had not known at Toulon, he none the less remained firm in his determination to lead the strict life of a prisoner. Not until the day before he finally left the castle would he consent even to be shown the historical treasures and works of art which it contained. Nor could the spring sun draw him for a single moment into the open air. Soon his health began to suffer; but when Boissonnet tried to persuade him to go riding, he stubbornly refused. 'The sun comes in at my window; I can travel with my eyes', was the only answer he would give; and he stared wistfully through the leaded panes at the foaming waters of the Gave and the distant blue line of the mountains.

But if the Emir's splendid physique enabled him to triumph over the strain of captivity, it was otherwise with some of the members of his family and his companions. Three of his youngest children and several of the other Arabs died during that summer. In the little Arab cemetery in the castle grounds gilt crescents still

shine above the crimson of the poppies to mark their humble resting-place.

At the end of June, when the Arabs had been two months in the castle, exciting news arrived from Paris: following upon rioting in the capital, La Moricière had been elected to replace Cavaignac as Minister for War. The very man who had pledged his word to Abd el Kader was now in a position to fulfil his promise; it seemed to the Arabs that their deliverance was assured. The Emir immediately wrote to the general: 'I am delighted to hear of your nomination, as I am certain that it will bring me my liberty. Many Frenchmen here have told me: "You are now as good as free, for your friend, who gave you his word, is in the position of highest authority.'" Then, remembering how he had already been betrayed, he changes his tone: 'God has given you the power. If you do not set me free there can be no excuse . . . it will be to your eternal shame.'

The waiting was intolerable. Days, weeks passed, but no reply came. As hope ebbed, the sullen indignation of Abd el Kader's companions turned to open fury. At the beginning of September, in the frenzy of their despair, they plotted to hurl themselves unarmed against their guards and die the deaths of martyrs. Abd el Kader got wind of their intention, and succeeded in dissuading them. 'We had no idea of trying to escape,' they told him; 'we wished to die, that our blood might stain the honour of France.' The Emir looked with mingled pity and admiration at these men who had voluntarily accompanied him into captivity; now, as in the past, they were still ready to die for his sake.

Boissonnet had felt obliged to report to Paris that the prisoners were on the verge of suicide. The Minister for War was alarmed. He determined to avoid at any cost the publicity of a scandal, and wrote at once directing that all the prisoners, excepting Abd el Kader, were to be released. The Arabs listened in silence to the offer of freedom; then with one accord they replied: 'While *he* is captive, none of us will separate our lot from his!'

This stubborn refusal decided the Government to increase the rigour of their imprisonment, and at the end of October an order came from Paris announcing that the Arabs were to be transferred to the Castle of Amboise. There they were to be kept in the strictest confinement; they might neither write nor receive letters; and no visitors were to be allowed without the special permission of the Minister for War.

The order was signed—‘La Moricière.’

It was at Abd el Kader’s particular request that the drive from the Château of Pau to the station was made in an open carriage. He considered the gesture as a token of gratitude towards the people of the town. ‘I shall never forget the kindness of their welcome,’ he told one of his friends; ‘I say it to you, and I wish I could tell all the people of Béarn.’

On November 2 the Arabs reached Amboise. As the carriages approached the castle, the prisoners stared up at its forbidding, grey façade; they saw the great north tower and the balcony from which Catherine de Médicis had watched the massacre of twelve hundred Huguenots, they saw the massive walls from which their mangled bodies had been suspended to divert the ladies of the court; they realized that they were exchanging the amenities of a country house for the grim confinement of a prison.

Yet the harsher discipline which their new life entailed did not seem to bring about a return of the mood of desperation. There was no more talk of suicide. Perhaps the mock freedom of Pau had in fact been more intolerable to them than was the unmistakable constraint of Amboise. For Abd el Kader, except for the Levées that he had been accustomed to hold at Pau the routine continued as before—prayer, meditation, the education of his sons, the company of his family and the conversations with Boissonnet filled his day.

Five weeks after their arrival an event occurred which again brought hope to the prisoners—Louis Napoléon was made President of the Republic. The Prince had himself known the misery of confinement in a French castle; he too had tasted the bitterness of exile; surely he would see that justice was done. Perhaps some rumour, even, of his good intentions was whispered in the corridors of Amboise, for there is little doubt that he spoke to more than one of his ministers of his concern over the captives.

Olivier, who had been working to enlist sympathy for Abd el Kader, seized the first opportunity of canvassing the Prince’s support. ‘There is a great act of reparation to be done,’ he wrote to him on December 26, and enclosed copies of Abd el Kader’s oath and his letters to the Provisional Government. On January 14, 1849, a special council was held at the Elysée, to which Bugeaud and Changarnier were summoned; but all the arguments of the Algerian generals and all the eloquence of the Prince were of no

avail against the brickwall opposition of the new Minister for War, General Rullière, who stubbornly refused to take the responsibility of releasing Abd el Kader. The Prince, whose position was still insecure, did not dare to act in open defiance of his advice, and was reluctantly obliged to let the matter drop.

Bugeaud had intended to visit Amboise towards the end of January, but he was prevented. In April he wrote to Abd el Kader in a final effort to persuade him to give up all idea of going to the East: 'I want you to decide to adopt France as your country, and to ask the Government to make you a grant of property, with right of descent to your heirs. You would thus have a position equal to that of our most influential men, and be able to practise your religion and bring up your children according to your wishes. I know that such a prospect may not seem very attractive to you; but I think that, for the sake of your children and your companions, you should give it careful consideration. You can see that their present existence is killing them. If, on the other hand, they were able to work on your estate, they would lead a happy life. They would enjoy cultivating the soil; they could hunt. In agriculture they would find something new to interest them every day, and there is no better cure for depression than the sight of Nature being mastered by man's exertions . . .'

The letter was characteristic of the man; it proposed for Abd el Kader the kind of life which its writer would have found ideal. But if Bugeaud really expected such an offer to be accepted, he sadly misjudged the character of his old antagonist. Abd el Kader's refusal was no less typical: 'If all the treasures in the world could be laid in the skirt of my *burnous* and set in the balance against my liberty, I would choose my liberty. I ask neither grace nor favour; I demand the execution of the engagements made with me . . . I will *not* give you back your word; I will die with it for your dishonour.'

The question of release now seemed to be indefinitely postponed. Yet in his heart Abd el Kader never wholly gave up hope; he believed that the Prince wanted to set him free, and that when he had the power to overrule the Assembly he would do so. During the dreary years of waiting which followed, he found consolation in making the rough draft of a book which was later published under the title *Hints for the Wise, Instruction for the Ignorant*. 'The work,' says Azan, 'is an example of modern Moslem philosophy—that is to say, it is not confined to questions of religion, but also deals with

political economy, philology, history and ethnology. The author extols science. He studies man and analyses his senses, quoting Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy and Galen; he shows him to be endowed by God with a quality higher than senses, mind or reason. He passes under review the various sciences and their practical applications.' In the matter of religion, the book reveals Abd el Kader's great tolerance towards both Christians and Jews. 'One is constantly aware how deeply he regrets that the Christians had made the great Prophet Jesus into the Son of God, and that they did not recognize in the Koran the compliment of the Old and New Testaments. It was his wish that all men who adore the One God and who believe in the same Prophets should no longer remain divided.' The work concludes with an historical and geographical sketch which is often childish and naïve, yet always noble in its simple honesty. On reading the book, it becomes only too evident that western civilization had come upon Abd el Kader too suddenly, and that he had not yet fully mastered its novel complexity.

It was probably at the suggestion of Boissonnet that Abd el Kader decided to clarify his thoughts by committing them to paper. The Frenchman was constantly in his company, and together the two would discuss matters of the most varied kinds, ranging through politics, science and religion to the history and customs of France. Again and again Abd el Kader would question his companion about the life and campaigns of Napoleon, who gradually became in his eyes the epitome of all that was brilliant in victory and courageous in adversity.

No doubt, too, they must have discussed the news from Algeria which, from the French point of view, was far from reassuring. Five times in six months the Governor-General had been replaced, and the natives were only too conscious of the insecurity which prevailed both at home and abroad; there had been unsuccessful demonstrations in Algiers against military administration; and many of the colonists who had been tempted overseas by the rosy picture of easy money had returned disillusioned to Europe. Not until 1857 was Kabylia subdued, and some semblance of order created in the new colony.

Abd el Kader still refused to leave the castle, although in theory he was allowed to walk in the park on Thursdays. In due course his health began to suffer severely, and the deathly pallor of his complexion alarmed the doctors; but when they attempted to

reason with him, he would only reply: 'Prison air has nothing to do with my health; what I need is the air of freedom.' Some of his companions broke down completely under the strain. 'Liberty, liberty! That alone would cure me!' cried one of the Arabs on his death-bed. Napoleon, two days before his death, had remembered the cloudy skies of his beloved France: 'If I could see those clouds once more,' he said longingly, 'I should be cured.'

In Paris the Emir's friends still worked untiringly on his behalf. Dupuch produced a pamphlet, dedicated to the Prince, which contained the words: 'Abd el Kader, like the Immortal Warrior (Napoleon), is to-day a prisoner. But he will not always be one, he will not even be one for long, for he is not England's captive; his fate is in the hands of Louis Napoléon.' The faithful Ollivier, too, had so far compromised his position by his unflinching loyalty to the Emir's cause, that he found the doors of Amboise no longer open to him. 'No exceptions can be made to the regulation,' the Minister for War told him when he protested.

But it was from 'perfidious Albion' that there came the strongest protests against French duplicity.<sup>1</sup> Thackeray wrote of the sufferings of the 'caged hawk of the desert'; the Earl of Winchelsea dedicated some 6,000 lines to the same theme; a Fellow of Clare sang (more briefly) of the captivity at Amboise where

'Struck down and quell'd, the fiery chief  
Is regal yet, albeit in grief'

and 'an English Lady', addressed to the Prince a ringing appeal for mercy beginning

'The aged Emir bows to fate: His sorrows claim a peaceful  
grave;

He seeks no ransom from the State, save this, which valour  
grants the brave.

Then speed him to his native tents: Say to the old man,  
"Rise, be free!"

The victor, when his soul relents, holds in his grasp divinity.'

The 'aged' Emir, it may be mentioned, was just forty-three!

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Laurie, in an ill-written little book, is almost the only Englishman to approve France's action in holding Abd el Kader in captivity. He writes: 'It was probably the best that could be done with him. If he had been handed over to the Khedive of Egypt, or to the Turks at Acre, he would only have been used as a pawn in the political game, or he might also have had convulsions after an interview with the Sultan or Khedive, as the last Dey of Algiers had, and have died in consequence. Such things used to happen.'

None of Abd el Kader's biographers, however, has described the important part played by the Marquis of Londonderry in obtaining sympathy and support for the Arab captive. His letters to Louis-Philippe and his Ministers had been unavailing; but soon after this the Marquis found his position considerably strengthened. Louis Napoléon, at a time when no one anticipated his future, had often been a guest at Wynyard Park, and was a close personal friend of the Marquis; when the Prince became President, Londonderry immediately wrote to him to engage his support. The Prince replied: 'What you tell me about the Emir Abd el Kader interests me enormously, and in your solicitude for him I recognize the same generous heart which once pleaded for the prisoner of Ham<sup>1</sup> . . . I confess that ever since I was elected, Abd el Kader's captivity has been constantly in my thoughts. It is a real burden on my conscience . . .

In 1851 the Marquis at last obtained leave from the French Government (who not unnaturally mistrusted the interference of the English *milord*) for himself, his wife and his daughter to visit Abd el Kader at Amboise. Though the Minister for War thought it politic not to withhold his permission, care was taken to make the expedition as difficult and unattractive as possible. First the visitors were kept waiting outside the castle gates, then in 'a small, cold chapel', and finally in 'a dirty, close waiting-room', cluttered up with bird-cages and dusty books. At last they were conducted across the garden, along winding terraces edged with tall cypress trees, till they reached the door of Abd el Kader's room. 'Upon this door being thrown open,' wrote Londonderry, 'the interesting old warrior stood before us. His *burnous* is as white as the driven snow—his beard as black as jet—his projecting huge eyebrows of the same hue, with teeth like ivory, and most expressive dark eyes, showing peculiarly the white liquid tinge surrounding the pupils. His stature is tall and commanding; his gesture, softness and amiability of expression almost inexplicable. Upon my approaching him, the Emir held out a very large, bony, and deep brown hand to me, which when I grasped, he turned to lead me to the sofa and the seats prepared at the head of the room.'

At first the conversation proceeded with difficulty, for Londonderry found the interpreter almost inaudible. 'However, I launched forth,' he said, 'commencing by expressing the deep and universal interest the British Empire took in the Emir's warlike deeds, and

<sup>1</sup> i.e., the Prince himself.

in his fate, and the regret universally felt at his still being retained a prisoner of war, etc.'

The Emir's replies 'were couched in similar phrases of civility'. He said that his one desire was to obtain an audience with the President; he begged the Marquis to bring it about if it were humanly possible.

Londonderry doubted whether this could be effected since he had no influence with the Government; but he promised to do his best. He had 'innate confidence' in Louis Napoléon, and if a boon could be granted, the Londonderrys, he said, would obtain it.

After drinking 'a few tablespoonsfuls of tea' the guests rose to take their leave. 'I think this indescribably interesting and noble old chief,' wrote the Marquis, 'was much pleased and greatly affected by our visit. During the whole period of our stay he had my hand grasped between his two large skinny palms, and on my departure he gave me two such affectionate hugs, that my neck and shoulders ached for some time after. Immediately previous to our departure, two pretty children, like Moorish mummies *en habillement*, were ushered in, and we saw some attendants hovering about, but we fell in with no others of the party—of the wives, of the brothers, or of the children—stated to belong to Abd el Kader's tribe, incorporated with him in his captivity, and in the habitation of the dreary, dismal old château.'

Londonderry did not succeed in getting the audience for which Abd el Kader had hoped; but on his return to England he gave the House of Lords an account of his visit and continued to work for the release of the prisoners.

On November 25, 1850, several months before Londonderry's journey to Amboise, a debate had taken place in the Chamber, which, in Winchelsea's opinion 'to borrow an Americanism, "fairly takes the hide and hair off", and may challenge past and future competition with the utmost indifference'. General Fabvier's motion for the liberation of Abd el Kader was met with frequent interruptions. M. Thouret observed 'that it was beyond his comprehension that people should consider these pirates (*écumeurs de mer*) as fair adversaries (laughter'). Abd el Kader, he added, had no right to complain of the 'hospitality' he had received in France when he remembered the lot of the French prisoners in Africa. (It was still convenient for Abd el Kader's enemies to hold him personally responsible for the massacre of Sidi Brahim, although his innocence had been fully established.) General Shramm,

Minister for War, excused the breach of faith with Abd el Kader by declaring that 'it was necessary to destroy an enemy by all the means in one's power—all the means compatible with the honour of a soldier' he hastened to add when objection was taken to the phrase. In such an atmosphere there was little that the Emir's supporters could hope to achieve.

But the Prince had not forgotten Abd el Kader. Through the intermediary of Boissonnet he had begun a correspondence with him, and in due course he felt strong enough to act. To test public opinion he began by releasing Abd el Kader's brothers and having them conveyed to Algiers. There was scarcely a murmur of disapproval.

The moment of Abd el Kader's liberation was at hand.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### LIBERTY

'THE Presidential chrysalis has assumed the last and perfect form, and that which was once a grub now soars upon wings of Imperial purple'—thus, in October, 1852, the *Illustrated London News* prepared its readers for the advent of the Second Empire.

Already ten months earlier a *coup d'état* had dissolved the Assembly; and Louis Napoléon, in a succession of provincial tours, had listened with lively satisfaction to the echoing crescendo of '*Vive l'Empereur!*' which confirmed him in his view that a new appeal to the people would not be made in vain. October found him in Touraine, and on the 16th of that month Boissonnet received orders to prepare carriages to conduct the Prince-President and his suite from Amboise station to the château.

The Emir was purposely kept in the dark about the visit, but the bustle in the château and the hastily made preparations must have aroused his curiosity. From one of the windows of the *Salle des Etats* he watched through his telescope a cortège that was winding its way up the hill towards the castle; once again the hope of freedom surged in his breast.

The Prince received the prisoner in the *Salle de Réception* and told him in a few words the object of his visit: 'Abd el Kader, I have come to set you at liberty'; then he handed to Boissonnet a letter which he had written in the carriage, and ordered him to translate it. Overcoming his emotion with difficulty, the latter began to read. As to the Emir, he had heard but a single word of the Prince's phrase, the word for which he had waited so long—'liberty'; he understood that his prayers had been answered.

'Abd el Kader, I come to tell you that you are free. You will be conducted to Brusa, in the Sultan's territory, as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, and you will be treated by the French Government in a manner worthy of your former rank. For a long time past, your captivity has caused me real distress, for it constantly reminded me that the Government which preceded

mine had not fulfilled its engagements towards an enemy in misfortune. To me nothing is more humiliating for the Government of a great nation, than when it so far mistrusts its own power as to break its promise. Generosity is always the best counsellor, and I am convinced that your residence in Turkey will not in any way affect the peace of our possessions in North Africa.

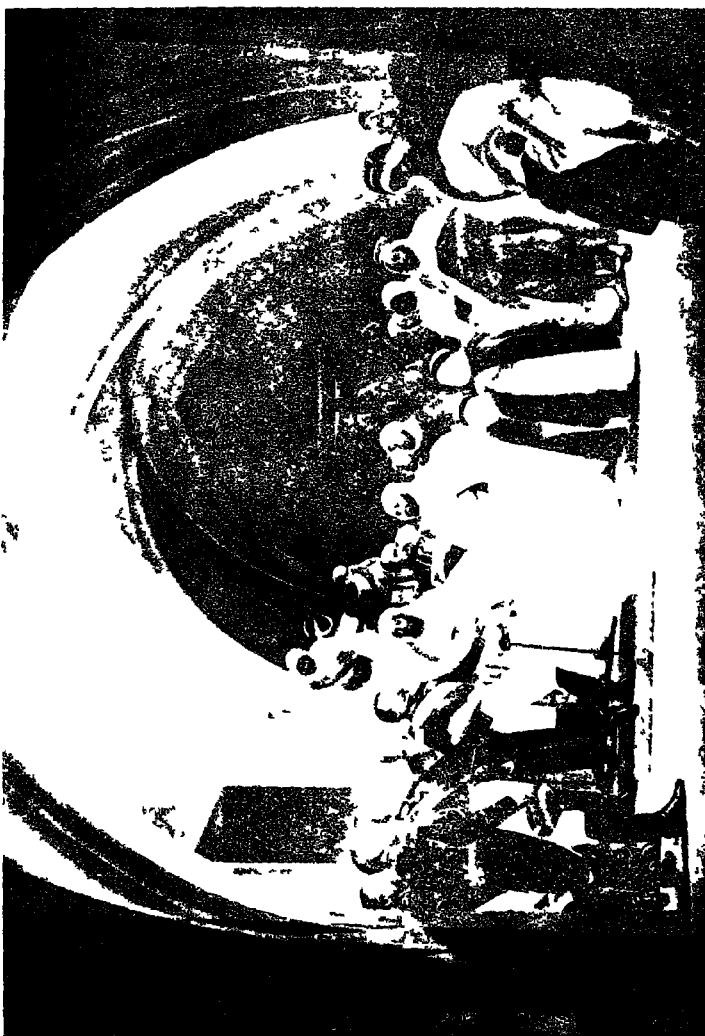
'Your religion, as well as mine, inculcates submission to the dictates of Providence. If France is supreme in Algeria, it is because God has willed it so; and the nation will never renounce its conquest. You have been the enemy of France; but none the less I am ready to do justice to your courage, your upright character, and your resignation in misfortune. I therefore feel it to be a point of honour to put an end to your imprisonment, for I have complete confidence in your word.'

For a moment Abd el Kader could hardly speak; he seized the Prince's hand and kissed it. Then his gratitude found words, and he begged that his mother and his children might also be allowed to thank their benefactor in person. The aged Zohra was sent for, while the Arabs who still shared their master's captivity lined the vestibule to catch a glimpse of the great Prince to whom they owed their liberty.

After hastily eating a bowl of *couscous* the Prince left the castle. Abd el Kader watched the retreating carriages as they vanished down the dusty hill-side. 'Others have overthrown me, others have imprisoned me,' he said to his followers; 'Louis Napoléon alone has conquered me.' Then he went into the little room which served as a mosque, to return thanks to God for his deliverance. Later, in the quiet of his own room, he took up his pen and rendered homage in verse to 'the great and illustrious scion of Napoleon' who by a generous action had made such amends as were in his power for an injustice committed by the Government of his predecessor.

It was Abd el Kader's particular wish to make a public demonstration of gratitude to the Prince; he therefore asked leave to visit Paris before setting out for the East. Permission being given, he started off on October 27 for the capital, accompanied by Boissonnet, his equerry Kara Mohammed, and Sidi Embarek's nephew Ben Allal.

The Press had paved the way for a favourable reception of the old enemy of France, for it had approved the Prince's action.



THE RELEASE OF ABD EL KADER

From a painting by Tissier in the Versailles Museum

(Photo Girandon)



The *Moniteur* wrote: 'The Prince has marked the end of his tour by a great act of justice and national generosity—he has set Abd el Kader free. A loyal and generous policy is alone fitting to a great nation; France will be grateful to the Prince for having adopted it.' Nations, like individuals, feel more at ease in the company of those upon whom they have conferred favours than of those from whom they have received them; the French, forgetful of those five years of injustice and suffering, glowed with the self-righteous pride of a people who felt they had acted magnanimously towards a conquered foe.

On a calm, autumnal evening Abd el Kader drove through the streets of Paris, gazing at the unfamiliar spectacle of a great European capital and bowing to the cheering crowds which self-approbation and curiosity had brought into the streets. It was still the old Paris which he saw—Paris untouched by the grandiose designs of Baron Haussmann; the city mirrored by Guys, Daumier and Garvanni, where Sainte-Beuve was writing his weekly '*Causeries du Lundi*' and Dunias his interminable series of picaresque adventures; the city where Rachel was the idol of the day, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' the book of the hour, and where (since '*Madame Bovary*' was still being written) '*La Dame aux Camélias*' was the most shocking sensation of the moment. It was Paris at the end of an epoch.

The carriage passed down the rue de Rivoli and drew up at the Hotel de la Terrasse, outside which the police were finding some difficulty in controlling the large crowds that had collected. Inside the hotel a message awaited the Emir, inviting him to attend a special performance at the opera that same evening. At first he pleaded fatigue after his journey; then, turning to Boissonnet, he inquired:

'Will the "Sultan" be there?'

'He will.'

'I shall see him?'

'Yes; but only from a distance.'

'Never mind, I shall see him; let us go.'

They drove along the freshly sanded streets. Outside the Opera giant stands of gas 'almost turned the night into day'. Within, the élite of Paris had gathered in the hope of seeing the Arab chief, and their spontaneous applause soon set at rest any doubt that French society might see in Abd el Kader only the man who was believed to have ordered the massacre of French prisoners. In a near-by box the blonde Miss Howard, the Prince's mistress,

failed (for all her diamonds) to achieve even a mild *succès de scandale*; all eyes were for the Emir.

The curtain rose upon the first act of Auber's 'Philtre', and the reporters began to jot down their impressions. One noted the Emir's 'clear olive complexion, his beard black and shining like ebony, and his snow-white *burnous*'; another observed him to be 'delighted, and perfectly at his ease' in these unfamiliar surroundings; a third found him 'calm, silent and impassive; his thoughts' (like those of how many opera-goers) 'probably far from the scene and sounds around him'. Between the first and second acts of the opera came a special cantata, composed in honour of the Prince's last provincial tour. At the words '*l'Empire, c'est la paix*' the audience cheered enthusiastically. Then, to the Emir's great delight, he was summoned to the Prince's box, where his liberator 'embraced him in the continental fashion' and showed him every attention. The princely example, says the Conte de Vicl Castel in his memoirs, was soon after embarrassingly imitated by a well-known marine painter named Gudin who, 'always desirous of making an exhibition of himself, went to the ex-Emir's box and embraced him publicly'.

The Prince was leaving Paris the next morning for two days' hunting, but immediately on his return an official reception was given for the Emir at Saint-Cloud. On the morning of the function Abd el Kader, who always had the French newspapers translated for him, turned to Boissonnet and said: 'The papers state that when the "Sultan" released me, I made him certain pledges. I preferred not to do so, both for his sake and for mine. For him, it would have detracted from his generosity by giving the impression that he had imposed conditions upon me; for my part, it was repugnant to me to appear like a Jew buying his freedom for a piece of paper. To show that I am acting of my own free will, I wish to give him a written statement.'

In the Salon at Saint-Cloud, where the Arabs and their escort of French officers awaited the Prince, stood a clock which indicated the time in the principal cities of the world. Abd el Kader drew out his watch, and adjusted it to the hour of day at Mecca; it was exactly three o'clock, the time of *Aasseur* (afternoon prayer). Quite simply, without an affectation, he turned towards the east and knelt in prayer.

The Prince entered with his ministers, and the officers of his military household in full uniform. Abd el Kader came forward

to kiss his hand, but Louis Napoléon once more embraced him. Asking leave to speak, the Emir began by thanking the Prince again. ‘But words vanish like the wind,’ he concluded; ‘writing alone is permanent. I offer Your Highness this paper; it contains a written promise.’

The document read as follows: ‘I have come to Your Highness to thank you for your kindness . . . You trusted me; you refused to listen to those who doubted. You set me free, thus fulfilling, without having made me any promises, the engagement which others made but failed to keep. I come then, to swear to you by the covenant and promises of God, by the promises of all the Prophets and Messengers of God, that I will never do anything contrary to the trust you have reposed in me. I will never break my word; I will never forget your kindness; and I promise never to return to Algeria.

‘When God ordered me to arise, I arose; I used gunpowder to the utmost of my power. When He ordered me to cease, I ceased—in obedience to the orders of the Omnipotent. It was then that I laid down my power and came to you . . . I have seen the greatness of your country, the might of your army, the vastness of your riches, and the multitude of your subjects; I have seen the justice of your judgements, the equity of your dealings, and the good management of your affairs; everything convinces me that none can conquer you, that none but Almighty God can oppose your will.

‘I hope that in your goodness you will keep me in your heart when I am far away, and that you will count me among your intimate friends; for although I may not be able to equal them in the services I am able to render you, at least I equal them in their affection towards you. May God increase the love of those who love you, and strike a growing terror into the hearts of your enemies.’

In a few kindly words the Prince acknowledged the document; then he personally conducted his guests through the rooms of the palace. This additional attention, he well understood, would not be wasted upon Abd el Kader who found more than one opportunity to express his gratitude. ‘My bones are old,’ he said, ‘but I feel as if I were beginning a new life.’ In the stables (which seemed to the Emir ‘like another palace’) he particularly admired a magnificent white Arab horse. ‘It is yours,’ said the Prince with true oriental courtesy; ‘you must try it with me in the park to-morrow.’

We cannot follow in detail all the events of the crowded and unforgettable fortnight which Abd el Kader passed in Paris. The principal sights of the city were visited, and wherever he went a gracious word or a poetic image marked his passage. Even the sun contributed its share to the success of his stay, providing a sequence of days 'more like June than October'.

At the Madeleine the Emir set an example of tolerance by praying before the Christian altar. 'When I first began my struggle with the French,' he said to the priest who accompanied him, 'I thought they were a people without religion. I found out my mistake. In any case, such churches as these would soon have convinced me of my error.' At Nôtre-Dame he stopped to examine the relics and art treasures with an attention which, as coming from a Mohammedan, surprised the onlookers. The robes worn by Napoleon at his coronation had a particular interest for him. Before leaving, he insisted upon climbing one of the towers, and marvelled at the '*ville de géants*' which lay spread at his feet.

At the Invalides he noticed among the flags several which had been taken from him in battle. 'Those days are far away now,' he said, deeply moved; 'I want to forget them.' Before the tomb of Napoleon he paused for some moments in silence. 'All that the genius of man and the wealth of the world could possibly do,' he said at length, 'would be merely to give this tomb a pale reflection of that greatness which filled the whole world with its glory'; then, as he turned away, he added, 'I have now seen what was mortal of the great captain; but where is the place that his name is not still living?' In the hospital the men rose as he passed. One old soldier struggled to his feet with difficulty, and Abd el Kader stopped to shake him by the hand. 'How worthy it is of a great people thus to watch over the old age of its brave defenders,' he said to him. 'I have seen the tomb of Napoleon, and touched his sword; and I should leave this place completely happy if it were not for the thought that there may be some here who have been disabled by me or by my soldiers. Yet I was only defending my country. . . .'

At the Hippodrome the Emir watched the simultaneous ascent of two balloons—the *Zéphire* and the *Éole*, navigated by M. Coste and M. Toutain—and was astounded at the skill with which an aerial battle was executed. At the Salle Saint-Cécile he attended a special performance of Reyer's Oriental Symphony 'Le Salem', a piece which was reputed to have recaptured the atmosphere of



LOUIS NAPOLEON AND ABD EL KADER AT SAINT-CLOUD, October 30th, 1852  
Marble relief by Carpeaux

(Photo Grandon)



the desert, and therefore to have for the Arab chief 'a double charm, being both a gesture of respect and a work of art'.

One afternoon he visited the Artillery Museum. On the following day he inspected the National Printing Works, where a facsimile of the document which he had presented to the Prince was produced before his very eyes, and his own writing copied on the autographic press. He was astonished at the intricacy of the mechanism of the modern presses, and at the marvellous rapidity with which impressions were thrown off. 'Yesterday I saw the batteries of war,' he exclaimed; 'here I see the batteries of thought.' At the menagerie of M. Huguet de Massilia, he was amazed at the courage of the lion-tamer. 'Never since the time of Daniel,' he said, 'has such a thing been seen.'

Yet he found time between all these engagements to receive more than three hundred visitors at his hotel. 'You see,' said Bellemare, who acted as interpreter, 'that those who fought you so bitterly a few years ago, and who since then have watched you bear misfortune with so stout a heart, are trying to make you forget the injustice you suffered.'

Abd el Kader appeared completely at his ease with his guests. 'To understand him properly,' wrote Bellemare, 'one had to see him in the company of all those people who came, every morning for a fortnight, to pay him their respects; to hear him talking tactics with the generals against whom he had fought, science with the scholars, and of his work as an organizer with the statesmen. For each he found a kind word, and an answer exactly suited to his own position and to that of his guest. This endless sequence of apposite remarks, made for a fortnight on end to people whose position could only be explained to him in a few short words, revealed one of the most remarkable aspects of the character of a man so remarkable in countless other ways.'

Among Abd el Kader's visitors were five French soldiers who had been his prisoners for two years, and who now came to thank him for his kindness to them in captivity. One of these, a man named Michel who was about to be discharged from the Municipal Guard on account of ill-health, begged to be allowed to become his personal servant at Brusa.

Among those with whom Abd el Kader renewed acquaintance in Paris, two men deserve special mention—the former Bishop of Algiers, Mgr. Dupuch, and Courby de Cognord. 'I have often prayed for you,' said the bishop, his eyes filling with tears. 'You

were the first Frenchman to understand me,' replied the Emir simply; 'you were the only one who always understood me; your prayer ascended to God, and it was God who guided the spirit and inspired the heart of the great Prince who set me free.'

With Courby de Cognord it was inevitable that the conversation should turn to the tragedy which succeeded Sidi Brahim. Both men must have been thinking of that November evening six years before, when they had sat drinking coffee together in Abd el Kader's tent. The Emir's words still rang in the Frenchman's ears: 'Remain with me, serve me, and I will make you great. . . . If I had been with my *deira* your men would never have died . . .' Courby de Cognord believed now, as he had believed then, that Abd el Kader was personally responsible for having ordered the murder of the French prisoners. Then Abd el Kader spoke: 'The massacre,' he said, 'took place against my orders and against my wishes. I was far away at the time.' 'Then why did you not punish the culprits?' asked Courby de Cognord. 'I could not do so,' replied the Emir. 'My chiefs were in revolt, and no longer obeyed me. My soldiers, embittered by defeats, had but a handful of barley to live on. Do not ask me further; I do not wish to accuse another.' Thus, with his habitual generosity, he chose to shield his brother-in-law, Mustapha ben Thami. Suddenly Courby de Cognord doubted him no longer, and seizing his hand gripped it warmly in his own.

One last event of the Paris visit remains to be related—the Grand Review held in Abd el Kader's honour at Satory near Versailles. The Emir, mounted on the white Arab horse given to him by the President, rode proudly forward between the Minister for War and General Daumas, followed by all the generals of the Paris army. He acknowledged the ovations of the crowd, bowing (if we may believe *The Times*)

'Not like a modern beau,  
But with a graceful Oriental bend,  
Pressing one *svarthy* arm just where below  
The heart in good men is supposed to tend.'

Then the dragoons and lancers manœuvred, the guns roared, and the cavalry charged in line. At the sound of the thundering hoofs, what memories, what visions of half-forgotten battles, must have surged up in Abd el Kader's mind. Once again he seemed to see the fertile plains of Algeria and the white *burnouses* of his Arabs, to

hear the clash of sabre against sabre, the wild cries of the victors, the groans of the dying . . . He awoke from his dream to receive the congratulations of the generals; he was no longer the Sultan of the Arabs—he was the fallen leader, the unbound captive, the honoured guest of France.

That evening the *Grandes Eaux* played at Versailles, where a banquet for eighty guests was given by the Minister for War, followed by a reception.

The wonderful fortnight was over; but before returning to Amboise, Abd el Kader paid a last visit to Saint-Cloud to take leave of the Prince. To Kara Mohammed and Ben Allal, Louis Napoléon gave rich presents; but his gift for the Emir—a magnificent sabre valued at 15,000 francs, was not yet ready, and it was presented to him later at Brusa by the French Ambassador. ‘I hope you will never draw it against France,’ said the Prince. ‘To-day,’ replied the Emir, ‘I am no longer among those who use the sword.’

‘There is no resisting evidence—there is no disputing facts,’ wrote *The Times*—‘Abd el Kader is the lion of the day. . . . He seems equally at home, equally at his ease, in a church, at the opera, receiving visitors, or being received by others; dropping his eyelids in respectful worship before the admiring gaze of beauty, or when that same eye lightens up with the fire that is not all dead within him at the neigh of a charger or the flash of an autumn sun on a horseman’s corslet.’ Yes; Abd el Kader was indeed the lion of French society—for a few brief weeks. On December 1 we read ‘Abd el Kader is deposed from his post of lion of the day by another noble infidel, Vely Pasha, the new Turkish Ambassador . . .’

Of Abd el Kader’s return to Amboise Bellemare has given a moving account: ‘When he reached Amboise he found his companions, who had already had news from him of the welcome that he had received, gathered at the main entrance of the castle to celebrate his return. He ran towards his mother who was waiting by the door of his room, embraced her warmly, then threw himself at her feet and smothered them with kisses. Zohra lifted him up, led him into the *Salon d’Honneur*, and begged him to give her a full account of his visit. Abd el Kader made her sit down, while he remained standing, and told her of the receptions he had attended in Paris and of the visits he had made. Then he took her arm and led her to the mosque where his companions were already assembled, and gave thanks to God.’ What Abd el Kader had told the Prince was true: ‘On October 15 my mother walked with a stick; on

the 17th, the day after your visit, she had forgotten that she had ever used one.' In her newly-won happiness the years had fallen from her shoulders, and for the first time for many long days the tears that she shed were tears of joy.

On November 22 France was called upon to elect an emperor. Abd el Kader had obtained permission from the Mayor of Amboise for himself and his companions to record their votes. 'To-day we are Frenchmen,' he said proudly. Their ballot-papers were collected in a special urn (though the Emir never knew that they were not counted, but preserved instead 'as a monument of gratitude'). The next day Louis Napoléon found himself elected by an overwhelming majority; 'the gas-lit tragedy of the Second Empire' had begun. By a strange coincidence it was exactly twenty years, day for day; since Abd el Kader had been elected Sultan upon the Plain of Eghris.

In December the Emir returned to Paris to be present at the proclamation of the Empire. At the foot of the great staircase in the Tuileries, he waited among the important officers of state for the Emperor's arrival. As soon as Napoleon saw him he came forward and, shaking him warmly by the hand, said: 'You see that your vote has brought me luck.' 'Sirc,' answered Abd el Kader, 'my vote is of no value, but it is the interpreter of my heart.'

A few days later the Emir left Amboise for the last time. Though not a rich man, his parting gesture was to present a magnificent glass chandelier to the parish church and to make gifts to local charities; the inhabitants of Amboise, for their part, opened a subscription for the upkeep of the cemetery where those of the Arabs who had died in captivity lay buried.

At the Gare de Lyons, on their way through Paris, the travellers 'partook of a collation offered by the company in the refreshment-room', and boarded a special train for Lyons, where the Comte de Castellane gave a reception in their honour. On December 21 they set sail from Marseilles for Constantinople.

Their ship, the *Labrador*, touched at Messina, and the Arabs were conducted on a tour of the island, during which they visited Taormina and made the ascent of Etna. On his departure Abd el Kader addressed a letter of thanks to the Governor who had accompanied them:

'We have everywhere met with the traces of the various populations who have inhabited your island. The sight made us

reflect that God is indeed the Lord of the universe, and that He gives the land to whom He wills. The mountain of fire is truly one of the wonders of the world. On viewing from its heights the highly cultivated and thickly populated plains which spread out before us, we thought of the Arab poet's lament on the evacuation of Sicily by the Saracens, "The recollection of you, O plains of Sicily, from the heights of Etna, makes me despair! If my tears were not salt, they should make rivers of water for this glorious island. Only an inhabitant of Paradise is fit to recount the wonders of Sicily".

On January 7, 1853, the *Labrador* sailed through the Sea of Marmara and anchored in Constantinople harbour. Then Abd el Kader, after five years of exile, set foot once more upon the sacred soil of Islam, and in the Mosque of Top-Hané returned thanks to Allah, for his deliverance.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE LAST BATTLE

ISLAM offered but a half-hearted welcome to the hero who had fought so gallantly in her defence. The guns of Top-Hané, it is true, fired a perfunctory salute; the Turkish officials were correctly polite; and the Sultan graciously summoned the Arab leader to his palace at Tcheragan to congratulate him on his bravery in battle and his patience in captivity. But the people as a whole showed themselves quite indifferent, and the watermen had been unable to conceal their astonishment that the French Ambassador should have found it necessary to send his own dragoman to the quay to welcome a mere Arab.

Still more inexplicable appeared the grand fête given by the Ambassador in Abd el Kader's honour. 'Such is the eradicable [sic] arrogance and self-sufficiency of the Turks,' says Churchill, 'that they despise all races alike but their own. Utter strangers to noble sentiments, and scorning to admit the possibility of there being anything in the world more important than themselves, they regarded the attention paid to Abd el Kader (despite his glorious struggles for their common faith) with jealousy and even derision. His fame oppressed them. An Arab hero was, in their minds, an incongruity, an impertinence.'

Ten days after his arrival, Abd el Kader and his companions set sail for Brusa, in Anatolia, where the Turkish Government had placed a house at their disposal. The Pasha of Brusa had been asked by the Sultan to send his carriage to meet Abd el Kader at the little landing-stage of Moudania. 'What!' he replied indignantly, 'get out my horses for an Arab? Aren't camels good enough for him?' But when the request was changed to an order, the outraged official thought it wiser to comply.

Abd el Kader surveyed with pleasure the delightful setting of Brusa.<sup>1</sup> Its meandering streams, its minarets and domes set against the blue backcloth of Mount Olympus, reminded him of Tlemcen.

<sup>1</sup> For a description of Brusa, see the chapter entitled 'The city of King Prusias' in *Persian Pictures* by Gertrude Bell.



ABD EL KADER, *circa* 1852  
From a photograph in the possession of Sir Sydney Cockerell



He was less impressed, however, with the house that had been allotted to him, since it turned out to be nothing more than a large, rambling, dilapidated old *khan*, roofless in part and wholly uninviting. But he was now a man of means (for Louis Napoléon had settled on him a pension of £4,000 a year), and he soon managed to get the building made habitable if not attractive. Further, he bought a small farmhouse above the town 'to which he escaped at times to regale himself with a sight of the sun and to breathe the fresh air'.

Abd el Kader's greatest wish had been granted—he was once more upon the soil of Islam; yet life at Brusa proved to be far from ideal. Although, thanks to French munificence, he was financially independent and in a position to refuse a monthly allowance offered to him on behalf of the Sultan, he felt ill at ease among the Turks and Greeks whose language he did not speak. The *ulemas* were jealous of his scholarship; the *effendis* ignored him; and the public functionaries, 'gradually recovering from their dread of his widely-spread influence, smiled with inward repose and satisfaction, not unmixed with contempt, as they congratulated each other on the discovery that the great Arab hero was after all only a "*derweesh*".'

The allowance made to Abd el Kader was certainly generous, but only a bare minimum of it was applied for his own needs. He provided liberally for those who had remained with him in captivity; he supported his two brothers and their families; and he made substantial gifts towards the upkeep of the mosques. Nor did the poor—and there were plenty of them in Brusa—ever appeal to him in vain. A characteristic scene took place on the occasion of the circumcision of one of the Emir's sons. Such an event was traditionally celebrated with cavalcades, flags, music and feasting; but Abd el Kader dispensed with this costly parade of wealth, and instead devoted the money to the poor. For three days his house was thrown open to all. 'Eat, my brothers, eat,' he cried as he distributed bread with his own hands to the thousands who flocked to the *khan*; 'but thank God and the hand which gave you this food. It is not I who give it you; it is the Sultan Napoleon, who clothed me with the cloak of his protection.'

Though Abd el Kader was now once more a free man, liberty modified the routine of his life but little; religion, the welfare of his companions and the education of his family, still had the first claims upon his time. Now, too, he set about the composition of

the book which he had planned at Amboise; and no doubt Boissonnet, who had accompanied him to Brusa, helped him in his work. When the manuscript was complete, he sent it to the President of the *Société Asiatique* (of which he had been made a member) so that, as he explained, 'his arrow might take its flight among the rest'.

While the Emir was at Brusa, the promised sabre arrived from France. It was a magnificent weapon, with a hilt encrusted with jewels. On the scabbard was engraved 'Sultan Napoleon to Emir Abd el Kader ben Mahi ed Din; December, 1852'. Abd el Kader searched his mind for some suitable return for this favour. While in Paris he had noticed the Emperor's preference for English horses; he now determined to find three Arab thoroughbreds so perfect that they would convince him of the superiority of their breed. After prolonged search through Syria Abd el Kader's agents returned with three horses which, even to his critical eye, seemed faultless, and they were duly dispatched to France. Each carried a head-stall on which was inscribed a poem of Abd el Kader's own composition:

*The Bay.*

Honour me, O Sultan, and approve me, for I am a horse of distinction. The whiteness of my head and feet are as the whiteness of the heart of him who sends me to you.

*The Chestnut.*

O Sultan! who by your justice, strength and goodness have surpassed all other monarchs, I am as the gold which you distribute to the poor and needy. Deign to mount me, and you will triumph over all your enemies.

*The Light Bay.*

O Sultan! In the eyes of monarchs and of men your glory is immortal. I am a thoroughbred, and my colour is as fire on the day of battle.

Three years had passed since Abd el Kader's arrival at Brusa. During this time his place of exile had grown no less uncongenial, and more than once he had considered asking the Emperor's permission to change it. Diffidence held him back. In 1855, however, an excuse presented itself: a large part of Brusa was laid in ruins by a severe earthquake, although the quarter where the Arabs lived was spared. Abd el Kader now asked, and readily obtained leave to visit Paris and make his request to Napoleon in

person. At Marscilles he was struck down by cholera; but his vigorous constitution once more saved his life, and in due course he continued his journey to Paris. He had hoped to reach the capital in time for Queen Victoria's visit to the International Exhibition but, to his bitter disappointment, 'a ministerial misunderstanding' prevented this.

The International Exhibition made a deep impression on the Emir, who was still dazzled by the marvels of modern machinery. He spent most of his time in the sections devoted to weaving and ironwork. 'This place,' he commented, 'is the Temple of the intellect to which the breath of God has given life.' But a far more unforgettable experience was the *Te Deum* sung at Nôtre-Dame to celebrate the fall of Sebastopol. To Marshal Vaillant's rather hesitating invitation (for the Frenchman doubted whether Abd el Kader's health or his religion would allow him to accept), the Emir inquired: 'Will it please the Christian Sultan if I go?' 'Undoubtedly,' came the answer. 'Then I am willing,' he replied. When Abd el Kader, looking deathly pale, entered the cathedral leaning upon the arm of Major de Fénelon, the sight of the great Arab created an immense sensation, and on leaving the building he was loudly cheered.

There was, too, the wished-for audience with Napoleon, who immediately consented to the Arabs changing their residence to Damascus. Having received from the Emperor the highly unsuitable gift of 'a magnificent dressing-case, fitted up by Tahau with all the refinement of European luxury', Abd el Kader left Paris and returned to Brusa on board a French ship which was in due course to transport the Arab colony and their belongings as far as Beyrouth.

If Constantinople and Brusa had received Abd el Kader with apathy, the Emir had no cause to complain of the welcome accorded to him in Syria. His journey across the Lebanon was a triumph. Astride the ridges, on the foothills, in the valleys, the Druzes had gathered to celebrate his arrival among them and to beg him to pass one night at least in their tents. The salutes of their muskets echoed from mountain to mountain as the cavalry wheeled, charged and fired in the wild frenzy of the *fantasia*; once again the Emir was among Arabs. Outside Damascus the whole Moslem population had lined the road for a mile from the gates, and even the Turkish troops marched out with military bands to escort him into the

city. No such Arab, it was agreed, had entered Damascus since the days of Saladin.

Among those who welcomed Abd el Kader most warmly were Ben Salem, who had been conveyed to Damascus by Bugeaud in 1847, and the colony of Algerians who had accompanied the *khalifa* into exile or joined him there since his arrival. These loyal soldiers, this army without arms, soon formed as it were a body-guard round the Emir.

At first Abd el Kader was lodged in a disused palace; but before long he purchased houses for himself and his companions in the El-Amara quarter, and a country house at Douummar about four miles north-west of the city. Then the life of prayer, study and good works was resumed, varied only by an occasional pilgrimage to some historic spot such as Jerusalem or Bethlehem. The Turkish authorities, having politely gone through the motions of a formal welcome, soon ignored Abd el Kader's existence; but the Arabs of Damascus and his own Algerians continued to venerate the champion of Islam. At their request he held classes for students in the Great Mosque, during which he enlivened the conventional commentaries on the Koran and the *Hadiths* by quotations from authors such as Aristotle and Plato. His reputation spread throughout Syria where, as a descendant of the Prophet, a *taleb*, and a leader of the *jihad*, he commanded a triple respect. Only those *ulemas* whose reputations had been dimmed by his greater brilliance or whose pride had been wounded by his wider popularity, watched and waited for the day of his undoing.

In order to understand the circumstances which brought about the last great drama of Abd el Kader's career, we must look for a moment at the heterogeneous population of Syria and the political situation which it had brought about. In the Lebanon Mountains lived the wild Druzes with their half pagan, half Mohammedan creed, the traditional friends of England; and by their side their uncongenial neighbours the Maronite Christians, a sect closely allied to Roman Catholicism, whose policy was linked with that of France. This whole district enjoyed virtual autonomy under the Porte, whose position in Syria was comparable to that which it had held until 1830 in the Regency of Algiers. In Damascus, where Turkish control was stronger, 20,000 Christians, mostly members of the Greek Church, lived in a state of perpetual apprehension by the side of 130,000 Mohammedans. There

was also, of course, the inevitable colony of Jews who numbered some 7,000.

In the year 1841 the Druzes and the Maronites, who until then had contrived to tolerate if not actually to love one another, unsheathed their swords, and their history for the next four years was one of almost uninterrupted bloodshed. This is not the place to give the complicated story of that struggle.<sup>1</sup> If the Maronites, as seems probable, were the aggressors, the Druzes were certainly not inclined to be conciliatory. As for the Turks, they played their old, familiar, fanatical game: while their military leaders fanned the flames of the war and plied the momentarily weaker side with ammunition in order to prolong the struggle, their diplomats skilfully bemused the European agents who attempted to arrive at the facts, and affected a pained innocence when their integrity was challenged. Meanwhile their soldiers, on the pretence of keeping order, were scurrying from massacre to massacre, always in the vanguard where there was killing, looting, burning, thieving or raping to be done.

After 1845 came a decade or more of precarious peace. In 1856, at the Peace of Paris, Turkey was obliged to accept certain conditions from the European Powers in return for the help given her against Russia in the Crimea. In particular, Christians throughout Asia Minor were to be accorded civil rights which gave them a status almost equal to that of Moslems. The Turkish authorities, to demonstrate to Europe that the peoples of Islam would not tolerate a state of affairs which they themselves deplored, sedulously fostered in secret the discontent which the decree had provoked.

In the spring of 1860 Turkish treachery, Druze vindictiveness and Maronite cowardice brought about a hideous recurrence of Christian massacres in the Lebanon. Soon the alarm spread to the towns. In Damascus, where the Pasha, Ahmed, was secretly planning nothing less than the total annihilation of the Christians in that city, refugees from the burning villages of the Lebanon added panic to the anxiety which already existed there.

But Ahmed's secret had not been well kept; a vague rumour of the plot had reached Abd el Kader who at once informed the French consul Lanusse. The consul was a man of action, and he immediately summoned the consular corps who, after some

<sup>1</sup> For the English point of view, see Churchill: *Druzes and Maronites*; for the French, see Pierre de la Gorce: *Histoire du Second Empire*, vol. iii.

discussion, took the fatal step of asking the help of Ahmed, the very author of the conspiracy.

The Pasha was kindness itself. He expressed the utmost astonishment at what they told him, pooh-poohed their credulity, and assured them that in any case they could implicitly rely upon himself and his gallant soldiers. Completely reassured, the consuls withdrew, while Ahmed retired to give orders for the postponement of the massacre to a more convenient moment and to urge greater caution upon the conspirators.

In May the whole farce—Abd el Kader's warning, the conclave of gullible consuls, the smiling reassurance of the Pasha—was re-enacted. Lanusse, it was now generally agreed in consular circles, was the victim of an obsession. Once more, too, the day of reckoning was countermanded.

In June Abd el Kader for the third time repeated his warning; but when Lanusse, who was now convinced of the reality of the danger, approached his brother consuls he was met with open ridicule.

Lanusse and Abd el Kader saw that they would have to act alone. The Emir's first concern was to recall (in small batches, so as to avoid exciting suspicion) those Algerians who were living in the outlying districts of Damascus. His remaining men he sent to the bazaars and cafés, to use in the cause of peace the credit they enjoyed as old warriors of the *jihad*. He himself set out to reason with the *mufti* and the more influential *imams* who, jealous of his popularity, wholly declined to co-operate with him. Meanwhile Lanusse was making use of the latitude granted to French consular officials in moments of crisis, to purchase arms and ammunition in the town. By so doing, he showed considerable initiative and courage, for if his fears had turned out to be groundless he would no doubt have been severely reprimanded for his pains.

It now only needed a spark to kindle the latent fury of the populace into a mighty conflagration. On July 8, 1860, some small children had been amusing themselves by chalking crosses upon one of the pavements in the town. Moslems who were passing spat upon and defiled these crosses, and forced the Christians who were near-by to stamp them underfoot. Those who resisted, they struck. The Christians unwisely complained to Ahmed, who proved to be surprisingly sympathetic. He gave orders that the offending Moslems were to be arrested and bastinadoed, then led in chains to the spot and forced to wash away the filth with their

own hands. Thus the Pasha, posing as the champion of Christianity, craftily fired the train of the explosion.

The following morning there was an ominous hush over the town; then suddenly towards noon the terrible cry went up: 'Death to the Christians!' At once, from every corner of the city, a shrieking, blaspheming crowd of fanatics, brandishing guns, swords, axes and knives, poured into the Bab Thouma, the quarter inhabited by the Christians.

What came next was not a battle; it was not civil war; it was mere butchery. The Christians, relates an eyewitness, were slaughtered like sheep. Here they fled in hundreds before a mere handful of cut-throats; there, too poor-spirited even to resist, they stretched out their necks to the *yataghuns* of the Moslems who paused hesitating between the rival attractions of pillage, murder and rape.

All the European consulates had become rallying-points for the fleeing Christians, and all (except the British) were soon besieged by howling mobs of Arabs. The British consul, who probably enjoyed a certain degree of immunity thanks to his country's attitude towards the Turks and Druzes, made (if we may believe his reports) repeated last-minute efforts to stir the Pasha to action. 'I always got the same replies,' he wrote; 'it was either "I will do it" or "I have done it"'; but he did nothing. When I angrily reproached him, he told me that he had insufficient troops. Never once did he stir from his palace.'

Soon to the other horrors was added that of fire. 'The houses were entered and gutted,' wrote Churchill who was in the Lebanon at the time and had opportunity of speaking with eyewitnesses. 'Large bands ran to and fro carrying off plunder of every description. The people of the suburbs came pouring in. The Turkish soldiers stationed at the gates opened them wide, and invited the intruders to come in boldly. Those who were without arms were refused admittance until they went back and procured them. The supplies of water were cut off. By sunset the whole Christian quarter was in a blaze, the flames waving and mounting, in huge billowy surges, like a sea of fire; while in the midst were seen distracted crowds of women, some carrying infants in their arms, shrieking and rushing along the flat roofs, and springing from house to house. Many lost their footing and fell, breaking their arms or legs, and perishing miserably. The greater part fled through the town, and rushing wildly into Mohammedan houses, implored the pity of the harem.'

Abd el Kader's men had broken in upon his siesta with the news

that the massacre had begun. Not for a second did he hesitate; ordering forty or fifty of his Algerians, under the faithful Kara Mohammed and Mohammed ben Kheir, to hold the French consulate to the death, he himself rode headlong to the house of the *mufti* to make one last desperate appeal to his better feelings. He was stubbornly refused admittance, and to all his entreaties there came only the cold, reiterated reply: 'The *mufti* sleeps.' Then the door was slammed in his face.

Now the Emir was joined by others of his men. The news they brought him was even worse than that which he had feared—Ahmed had confined his troops to the citadel, and there was not even the pretence of official restraint in the Christian quarter; the revolt was no mere spontaneous outbreak of rioting, as Abd el Kader had hoped, but a wholesale, organized slaughter carried out with the government's approval.

The Algerians, with Abd el Kader at their head, moved off rapidly towards the French consulate and forced an entrance through the shrieking mob which surrounded it. They found the defences weakening; in a few minutes time they would have come too late. 'Come with me!' cried the Emir to Lanusse. 'If you stay here, I must divide my strength. Strike your flag above my house, and Abd el Kader's home will become France.'

Under escort of the Algerians, Lanusse and those who had taken refuge in the consulate broke out of the building and were conducted without accident through the city to the Emir's house. There they found the American, Russian and Greek consuls (who but a few days ago had ridiculed the idea of a massacre) already installed, together with a number of other Christians.

But now that Abd el Kader had openly championed the cause of the Christians, even his own house was no longer safe. Soon a large crowd of Arabs began to collect before it, shouting menacingly for the Christians to be given up. It would have been noble enough if Abd el Kader had now been content to defend his house against the murderous attack of the Arab cut-throats. What he decided to do was far more courageous. Leaving a moderate force of Algerians to guard the building, he set out with two of his sons and three hundred of his most stalwart men, making straight for the centre of the rioting.

The murderers, pausing in their bloody work, listened dumb-founded to the voice of an Arab—an Arab who for fifteen years had tirelessly waged the *jihad*—crying: 'Christians, come to me!

I am Abd el Kader, son of Mahi ed Din. Trust me and I will protect you.' At first there was no response; the wretched victims dreaded fresh treachery. Then, gradually gaining confidence, white-faced figures began to appear behind the bars of little windows; covered with filth, trembling with fright, men, women and children began to crawl out from wells, sinks and gutters.

As fast as they could be collected, the Christians were escorted back in small groups to the Emir's house. For two hours, advancing from street to street, Abd el Kader and his men continued their work, while the scowling assassins looked on in impotent rage as their prey was snatched from beneath their very eyes. From the Greek consulate alone, three hundred people were rescued; and from the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, which fortunately lay in a part of the town not yet reached by the mob, six priests, eleven nuns and four hundred children. 'It must have been an intensely moving and magnificent spectacle,' wrote Bellemare, 'this descendant of the Prophet, forcing his way through the bloodstained streets of Damascus, surrounded by priests, nuns and children whom he had just snatched from death; these old warriors of the *jihad*, leading with one hand the poor orphans whose protectors they had become, while with the other they drove back the murderers at the butt-ends of their rifles.'

That night, for all that Abd el Kader could do, the slaughter continued. 'To attempt to detail all the atrocities that were committed would be repugnant and useless,' wrote Churchill, who then proceeds to describe 'the violation of women, the ravishing of young girls—some in the very streets amidst coarse laughs and savage jeers—some snatched up and carried off. Hundreds of them thus disappeared, hurried away to distant parts in the surrounding country, where they were instantly married to Mohammedans. Men of all ages from the boy to the old man, were forced to apostatize, were circumcised on the spot, in derision, and then put to death. The churches and convents, which, in the first paroxysm of terror, had been filled to suffocation, presented piles of corpses, mixed up promiscuously with the wounded and only half dead whose last agonies were amidst flaming beams and calcined blocks of stone falling in upon them with earthquake shock. The thoroughfares were choked with the slain'. The Jews, adds Lady Burton, 'stood trembling at their doors whilst the slaughter lasted, offering glasses of lemonade to the Moslems exhausted by carnage, and with a sign betrayed the hiding-place

of the wretches who had sought refuge with them; then, taking advantage of the fearful disorder, they rushed in and sacked what houses they could'.

The news that Abd el Kader was giving protection to many hundreds of Christians created an immense sensation in the town. The following morning at dawn a great crowd surged towards his house with insulting cries, demanding that the Christians should be given up to them. The Emir, unarmed and unprotected, came out fearlessly and faced the rabble. For a considerable time he was unable to make himself heard, but at last they agreed to listen.

'My brothers,' he cried, 'what you are doing is a sin. Is it not written: "Let there be no compulsion in matters of religion . . . He who kills a man who has not himself committed murder or spread disorder in the land, will be held guilty of murder."'

'We don't need your advice,' jeered some one in the crowd—'*soldier of the jihad*,' he added sarcastically.

'O fools!' answered the Emir; 'you are as beasts that have no understanding beyond grass and water.'

'The Christians!' shouted the mob; 'give us the Christians!'

'The Christians?' cried Abd el Kader, his eyes flashing. 'As long as a single one of my brave soldiers still lives, you shall not have them. The Christians are my guests. Murderers of women and children! Sons of iniquity!—come, try and take them, and you will see how the soldiers of Abd el Kader can fight!' Then, turning to his men: 'I swear before God that we are about to fight for a cause as sacred as that for which we fought together of old. Kara Mohammed! My horse, my arms!'

A shout of enthusiasm went up from the soldiers. Rapidly the crowd began to disperse, and in a minute or two the street was empty. Then once more the Algerians resumed their task of collecting the hunted Christians from their hiding-places and bringing them to safety—a task made easier now by the wholesome fear the soldiers had inspired in the rebels.

By the third day the Arabs had grown weary of killing. In fact, almost all the Christians were by this time either already dead or in the little island of refuge formed in the centre of the town by the Emir's house and the adjoining houses of his companions. There, huddled together in indescribable promiscuity and confusion, were gathered more than four thousand refugees, many of whom were forced to stand since there was no space on the ground to sit..

Upon those who had found accommodation in the courtyards, the pitiless June sun blazed down in all its fury. ‘The mephitic odours which emanated from this conglomeration of people threatened to kill by pestilence those whom the sword had spared.’ Even the meagre ration of coarse bread and cucumber had given out. In these critical circumstances Abd el Kader, after discussion with the consuls, decided to send a deputation to the Pasha imploring his assistance.

Ahmed, bully and coward, had by this time become thoroughly frightened. He had over-zealously carried out the instructions received from head-quarters, and it had suddenly occurred to him that the Porte would make him a scapegoat for the wrath of Europe. When the deputation arrived, he showed himself genuinely eager to help. He apologized for having withheld the aid of his soldiers; many of them, he explained, were conscripted criminals, and he thought that their presence in the town would have done more harm than good. He urged Abd el Kader to send all the Christians to the citadel, with a strong guard of Algerians to protect them from his own troops.

The plan was easier to formulate than to execute. Terrible though the conditions were in Abd el Kader’s house, when the Christians heard that they were to be taken away they set up a great cry of dismay: ‘O Abd el Kader, for the love of God do not send us to the Turks.’ ‘By your mother! by your wife! by your children! O Abd el Kader, save us from the Turks!’ ‘Kill us, kill us yourself... you who gave us refuge will at least see that we die a quick death!’ They clutched at the railings, at the furniture; shrieking hysterically, they rolled themselves on the ground at Abd el Kader’s feet. The Emir was deeply moved. Five months later, as he described the scene to some French officers, tears came to his eyes at the mere recollection of it.

The first batch of Christians had to be dragged away by force. Two of the consuls agreed to accompany them, a gesture which gradually restored a certain degree of confidence, and before long the refugees were as eager to join their companions in the citadel as they had once been reluctant to leave the safety of Abd el Kader’s house. Now that there was breathing-space once more in his courts, the Emir let it be published throughout the town that he would pay fifty piastres for every Christian brought to him. Seated on a mat by the entrance of his house, his sons at his side, he proceeded to dole out money to those Jews and Arabs who had

come to realize that there was more profit to be had from the salvation of the Christian dogs than from their extermination.

Abd el Kader's heroic action had been the means of saving 12,000 lives. Yet he claimed no credit to himself for what he had done. When Bellemare wrote to congratulate him, he replied modestly: 'I do not deserve your praises, for I was only an instrument. Tell this to your Sultan and mine. As I passed through the streets of Damascus I saw him walking before me, saying "do this", and I did it; "go this way", and I went; "save this man", and I saved him . . .'

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE CLOSING YEARS

CHURCHILL has described in detail the mockery of justice which followed in the wake of the massacre. Fuad Pasha, Extraordinary Commissioner sent by the Sublime Porte to investigate the situation, proved himself a past-master in the oriental art of evasion. He poured forth apologies and broadcast ceaseless protestations of innocence and ignorance in high quarters; he promised reforms on every hand; he found scapegoats in sufficient quantities to impress Europe with the probity of his intentions; by delays and subterfuges, he pared down the amount of the indemnity to a mere fraction of the original claim; and above all, he so skilfully played upon English jealousy of French influence, that the army of six thousand French soldiers which was dispatched under international agreement to Syria had to be withdrawn before it had even begun to grapple with the real problems that confronted it.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all Fuad's bluff, however, justice was not defrauded of one important victim—Ahmed's guilt was firmly established, and he paid the price of it with his head. Nor could Turkish jealousy prevent Abd el Kader's brave action from receiving universal recognition; and when Napoleon III presented the great Arab with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour—a gesture which was quickly imitated by Russia, Prussia and Greece—the Sultan felt obliged to make a show of goodwill by the award of the order of the Mcdjidié (1st class). From England came the gift of a double-barrelled gun inlaid with gold, from America a brace of pistols similarly inlaid, and from the French Freemasons a magnificent star.

Out of Islam, too, came a tribute which moved the Emir deeply. Shamyl,<sup>2</sup> that other great and fallen Moslem champion, wrote from

<sup>1</sup> France had originally promised to recall her troops at the end of six months. After nine months had elapsed, England, not altogether forgetful, perhaps, of the 'temporary' occupation of Algiers, forced the belated fulfilment of the agreement.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to remember that Marshal Soult, writing in 1843, had said: 'There are only three men alive to-day to whom the epithet *great* can rightfully be applied, and they are all Moslems: Abd el Kader, Mehemet Ali and Shamyl.'

his place of exile a letter full of sympathy and understanding. After expressing his horror at the massacre, he concluded: 'I was astonished at the blindness of the functionaries who have plunged into such excesses, forgetful of the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him): "*Whoever shall be unjust towards a tributary (a Christian), who shall do him a wrong, who shall lay on him any charge beyond his means, and finally, who shall deprive him of anything without his own consent, it is I who will be his accuser on the Day of Judgement.*" Oh, the sublime words! But when I was informed that you had covered the tributarics with the wings of your kindness and compassion, that you had opposed yourself to the men who act contrary to the will of the Most High God, and that you had conquered the palm of victory in the amphitheatre of glory—a success which you have richly merited—I praised you, as the Most High God will praise you in that day when fortune and children will avail but little. Truly, you have realized the word of the great Apostle whom the Most High God sent as a mark of pity for his creatures, and you have opposed a barrier to those who rejected his great example. May God preserve us from those who transgress His laws!

'Impatient to testify the admiration I feel for your conduct, I hasten to address you this letter, as a drop out of the reservoir of my sympathies.

'The unfortunate, who, through the working of the decrees of the Great Master, has fallen into the hands of the infidels.

'Shamyl, the Exile.'

Some of Abd el Kader's admirers directed their enthusiasm into a more practical channel, and proposed the formation of an Arabian Empire under his leadership. A spate of pamphlets appeared in France, in which the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme were weighed against each other. 'The ruin of the Turkish Empire is certain, and will not be long delayed,' writes the anonymous author of *Abd el Kader, Empereur d'Arabie*. 'Would not the formation of a new empire, placed as it were in the very centre of Europe, Asia and Africa, and watered by four seas, dispel the ambitious dreams of certain nations?' He adds: 'A man is needed to rule it; and why should not this man be Abd el Kader, who, during the late massacres, taught Europe the real meaning of the maxims of the Koran and the way a true Believer should put them into practice? He would find among the Arabs, where his

fame is already widespread, all the components necessary to satisfy his ambition, his generosity and his bravery.'

The scheme, however, came to nothing; though, as Azan points out, subsequent events proved it to have been no mere Utopian dream.

The tranquil pattern of Abd el Kader's life had been interrupted by the terrible events of June, and before it could be resumed he felt the need of purification from contact with evil. For two months he shut himself up in the Great Mosque at Damascus, and this retreat was followed by a pilgrimage to the tomb of Khalil ibn Walid, the Prophet's lieutenant, at Homs. On the return journey he visited the splendid ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbek.

He arrived home to find that his mother's health was rapidly declining. 'You know that Lalla Zohra is now nearly a hundred years old,' wrote the Emir's son Mohammed to Léon Roches (January, 1861). 'She can no longer walk. Every day our father takes her in his arms and carries her up to the terrace above the house so that she can enjoy the fresh air. He turns her venerable head towards the *Kaahih* and she recites her prayers.' In July the end came: 'She passed into the hands of God,' Abd el Kader wrote to Roches, 'after making her last profession of faith in my arms.'

In his misery, Abd el Kader's thoughts turned once more towards Mecca. For some time past it had been his greatest ambition to perform the crowning act of devotion which would entitle him to call himself a 'Fellow of the Prophet'. To achieve this distinction it was necessary to remain at Mecca or Medina during two successive pilgrimages. In January, 1863, he left Damascus, and after making a short stay in Cairo embarked for Jeddah.

At Mecca he was enthusiastically received by the *qulemas* and *imams*. So great was his popularity and so insistent his visitors, that after ten days he found it necessary to refuse to grant audiences. For a whole year he continued to lead the strict life of a hermit, never leaving his cell except to visit the mosque, and only allowing himself four hours' sleep and a single meal of bread and olives in the twenty-four hours; the rest of his day and night was spent in study, meditation and prayers.

This severe self-discipline told upon his health, and early in 1864

he was obliged to recuperate at Taïf, a small town in the mountains fourteen hours from Mecca. After once more taking part in the ceremonies of the *Hadj*, he turned his face towards home, reaching Alexandria in June. Here an unexpected honour awaited him: at a special convocation of the Lodge of the Pyramids, the Masonic body initiated him into their mysteries.

Within a year Abd el Kader was once more upon his travels. In the spring of 1865 he set out for Paris to thank the Emperor in person for the honour he had received and for the increase in his pension which, as a reward for his services to France, had now been raised to £6,000. On his way through Constantinople he was received in audience by the Sultan, and generously pleaded for the pardon of those Moslems who were still being held in prison for their complicity in the massacres. His request was granted.

Abd el Kader arrived in Paris in July, accompanied by the French consul at Damascus and an interpreter. He had aged considerably since his last visit; his face had grown thinner, and his beard was now snow-white.<sup>1</sup> But his frame was as lithe and active as ever. Across his breast he proudly wore the broad ribband of the Legion of Honour.

There were plenty of visits to be paid; and more than one old acquaintance to renew, for Daumas and Boissonnet were in Paris to meet him. Once more the crowds gave him an enthusiastic welcome, and Bellcmare's book *Abd el Kader, sa vie politique et militaire*, which had been published two years previously, soon had a lively sale. The Emir's public engagements, however, were less numerous, and he could often be seen driving along the Champs Elysées or through the shady avenues of the Bois de Boulogne. He went to the opera—remembering, no doubt, that other visit thirteen years earlier when he had been presented to his liberator Louis Napoléon—but he ‘politely though firmly declined the honour’ of going behind the stage after the performance.

At the beginning of August Abd el Kader paid a brief, unofficial visit to London, where he remained for four days. He stayed at Claridge's, visited the Crystal Palace, and carried away ‘imperishable memories’; but there seems to be no other record of his passage. England was, in any case, preoccupied with the new Atlantic cable,

<sup>1</sup> According to the Press; but in Fuku's lithograph it is black. In later life he seems to have used dyes (see p. 279).



ABD EL KADUR in 1965

Lithograph by Fuku from the *Pantheon des illustrations françaises au XIXe siècle*



and had little time to waste over some deposed and long-forgotten oriental potentate.

While Abd el Kader was in London, a statement appeared in the English press (only to be immediately contradicted) that he was about to be appointed Viceroy of Algeria. The rumour, however, was not without foundation, though in the end nothing came of the scheme.

To appreciate the situation which gave rise to this proposal, we must glance for a moment at the disquieting trend of events in the new colony since Abd el Kader's surrender. With the conquest of Greater Kabylia in 1857, all serious military resistance had come to an end; but the tension remained. In the French colony a ceaseless struggle raged between the civil and the military authorities. The real colonists, who had hoped to find El Dorado, found only poverty and disillusionment, while a few speculators made fortunes. The natives, robbed, hunted and oppressed, were reduced to penury.

Since it ill becomes an Englishman to throw the first stone, let us hear the testimony of a Frenchman—Guy de Maupassant<sup>1</sup>—on the subject of French colonial administration in Algeria:

'From the very first moment, you cannot help having an uneasy feeling of progress misapplied, of a civilization that is brutal, clumsy, and quite unsuited to the customs, the climate and the inhabitants of the country. It is *we* who appear the barbarians in this land of barbarians. Admittedly they are uncouth; but then they are at home, they have customs and traditions which are centuries old and which we do not yet understand. Napoleon III made a wise remark (perhaps some minister whispered it in his ear): "What we need in Algeria are not conquerors, but men of vision." But we have remained brutal, blundering conquerors, infatuated with our ready-made ideas. We impose our own way of life, our Parisian houses, and our customs—which in this country are gross offences against taste, reason and understanding. Everything that we do is a breach of common sense, a challenge to the country—not so much to the inhabitants as to the very soil itself. . . . Since our colonial policy consists in ruining the Arab, in robbing him ceaselessly, in pursuing him without mercy and in reducing him to destitution, we shall see more revolts yet.' Alphonse Daudet, too, noted 'the curious spectacle . . . of

<sup>1</sup> *Au Soleil*, 1884.

a barbarous and decadent people whom we civilize by giving our own vices'.

It was generally felt in France that the colony had proved a bad investment. At the beginning of his reign, Napoleon III had stigmatized Algeria as 'a dead-weight chained to the feet of France', but after visiting it in 1860 he qualified his opinion: 'Algeria is not a colony, but an Arab kingdom. The natives have the same right to my protection as the colonists, for I am just as much Emperor of the Arabs as Emperor of the French.' A second visit in 1865 further modified his views, and he now spoke of Algeria as 'at the same time an Arab kingdom, a European colony and a French camp'. The conception of an Arab kingdom, developed for the greater glory of France, became popular, and soon there was a strong body of opinion in favour of solving the colony's difficulties by the creation of a native Viceroy. Only one man could fill this position—Abd el Kader.

According to statements published in the French press, the scheme came to nothing because Abd el Kader (as he was reported to have confessed to the Emperor) was convinced that he could exert no influence in Algeria except in the role of leader of a religious war. But Azan has pointed out that the real explanation lay elsewhere: the Emir had advanced too far in the ways of progress to be understood by the fanatical Moslems of North Africa. Abd el Kader's tolerance at this time, and his high-minded attitude to life, are clearly revealed in a letter which he wrote, on his return to Damascus, to his friend Charles Eynard: 'It may be a small matter, but I have now become so tolerant that I respect all men, whatever their religion or beliefs. I have even become the protector of dumb animals. I try not to harm any man, but rather to do him good. God created men to be His servants, not the servants of other men.'

The autumn of Abd el Kader's eventful, stormy life was calm and unruffled. In his country home at Douummar, a beautiful estate overhanging the river Barada (the Biblical Abana), he continued to lead a patriarchal existence, surrounded by his children and grandchildren.

Many Europeans, passing through or resident in Damascus, went to pay their respects to the old warrior, and all carried away unforgettable memories of his kindness, his wisdom and his deep piety. Richard Burton, when he occupied the consulate, would

often ride over with his wife in the cool of the evening. While he retailed the latest news from Europe, she would drink the Emir's famous mint-tea which infallibly cured her headaches. On one occasion she took 'Lady A——'<sup>1</sup> to see Abd el Kader, who was 'delighted with the visit, as her father was chiefly instrumental in moving Napoleon III to release him from the château d'Amboise'. Doughty was another visitor of that 'very erudite among erudite Moslems'; and so were Wilfrid Blunt and his wife Lady Anne. Blunt, strongly in sympathy with the pan-Islamic movement, was still planning the formation of an Arabian Caliphate with Abd el Kader at its head—a project which met with little support in England.

Among Frenchmen who knew the Emir may be mentioned the Visconte de Vogüé and Doctor Lortet. De Vogüé observed the Emir's splendid head—*'grave et douce, mais susceptible de s'illuminer sous une impression religieuse ou bellique'*—and noted that his carefully dyed hair made him appear less than his age. Abd el Kader eagerly inquired about the state of affairs in France, and begged de Vogüé to use his influence on behalf of one of his sons who had been involved in a recent insurrection.

Although the Emir could now speak French passably, Lortet tells us that he still preferred to make use of an interpreter. During their conversation, which turned for the most part upon the political situation in Syria, Abd el Kader 'several times withdrew (without ostentation) behind some bushes to pray'. Meanwhile Mme. Lortet was being entertained in the harem, where she found the women dressed in European clothes and crinolines, with artificial flowers in their hair, smoking endless cigarettes and *nargiléhs*. Before leaving, the Frenchman gave medical treatment to one of the Emir's sons—*'un grand nègre presque aveugle'*.

Lortet, in his book *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui*, expressed his regret that France had not made better use of Abd el Kader's influence over the Moslems. 'This influence grows less every day,' he wrote. 'His sons no longer enjoy any prestige, and the Syrians see with amazement French money being used to enrich a family which to-day is little worthy of interest. It would have been easy enough to have brought into Syria a large number of Algerians, and (through the intermediary of Abd el Kader, whom France holds completely by the purse-strings) to have used them to increase our

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Lady Adelaide Law, daughter of the third Marquis of Londonderry. She had accompanied her father on his visit to Abd el Kader at Amboise.

authority. But alas! Abd el Kader's children have been sent to England and Prussia to complete their education . . .<sup>1</sup>

Azan relates an episode which shows that Abd el Kader remained to the end firm in his loyalty to France. One day some visitors, 'with the bad taste that is characteristic of certain nations', were describing with obvious relish the French disaster of 1870. Abd el Kader, who felt the French defeat deeply and had begged in vain to be allowed to fight in the ranks of his former enemies, rose without speaking and left the room, to return a moment later wearing across his breast the broad cordon of the Legion of Honour.

Thus the closing years of Abd el Kader's life slipped slowly by. Of the generation of French generals against whom he had fought in Algeria, he had outlived all but one; alone the duc d'Aumale, who had received his surrender on that cold December morning in the little garden of the commandant's house at Djemmaa-Ghazaouet, lived on. More than thirty years had passed since then, more than twenty since that last great battle in the streets of Damascus.

Had Abd el Kader been ambitious—as some have maintained—an empire in Syria or Algeria might have been his; but he chose to shun the limelight, to prepare himself in quiet seclusion for the life beyond the grave. A month before his death he wrote to Roches: 'To-day most people attend only to the things of this world; he who leads the fuller life is equally concerned, in word and deed, with the affairs of this world and the expectations of the next.'

Early in May, 1883, Abd el Kader fell ill. He bore his suffering with courage, patiently waiting till God should call him, fortifying his spirit with prayer and meditation. Three weeks later, on the night of May 25, he died.

'At dawn the following day,' says Azan, 'his body was borne to Damascus in the carriage which Napoleon III had given him, and taken to the El Amara quarter where the consuls and a large crowd were waiting. The coffin was then carried by the *imams* of the town to the Omayyade Mosque, where a prayer was said, and thence to Salahieh two miles north-west of Damascus.' Here,

<sup>1</sup> Abd el Kader's family did him little credit. After his death, five of his ten surviving sons became Turkish subjects in defiance of his express wishes; and readers of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* will remember his two grandsons whose fanaticism and treachery caused Lawrence so much trouble in 1918.

in the mosque which stands above the tomb of the famous philosopher and mystic Muhieddin ibn el Aribi, Abd el Kader found his last resting-place.

Thus passed the Arab who for fifteen years, with the slenderest resources, had held the might of a great European power at bay. Without money, with little influence, he had won a throne, organized a nation, created an army, built towns, and instituted a system of administration so perfect that his conquerors did not attempt to improve upon it. Betrayed by the French, whose word he had trusted, he not only forgave them their treachery but became their staunchest ally. By the magnanimity of his actions, he had proved before all the world that a 'Christian' people had still much to learn from a true follower of the precepts of Islam.

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## GLOSSARY

- Aasseur.* Afternoon (prayer).  
*Attatîche.* Curtained litter carried on a camel.  
*Agha.* Commander; chief officer.  
*Aid es Seghir.* Little Feast.  
*Aman.* Pardon; promise of pardon.  
*Burnous.* Cloak with sleeves and cowl.  
*Chaouch.* Ushers; door-keepers.  
*Chéchia.* A kind of cap.  
*Couseous.* Staple Arab dish containing rice.  
*Dervish (Derweesh).* Mohammedan friar.  
*Dhohor.* Midday (prayer).  
*Douar (Plural Deira).* Group of tents.  
*Effendi.* Turkish official.  
*Eucha.* Supper (prayer).  
*Fantasia.* Powder-play; mock battle.  
*Fedjeur.* Dawn (prayer).  
*Fetwa.* Religious decision.  
*Guetna.* Plural of Guitoun, a tent.  
*Hadith.* The body of Moslem tradition regarding Mohammed.  
*Hadj.* The pilgrimage to Mecca; or one who has made it.  
*Haïk.* Outer garment covering the head and body.  
*Hujra.* A chamber; mausoleum.  
*Ihram.* A white, seamless garment.  
*Imam.* (Prayer) leader.  
*Jihad.* Holy War.
- Kaabah.* ‘Cube’—the House of God at Mecca.  
*Kadi.* A judge.  
*Kafтан.* Long girdled under-tunic.  
*Katid.* Chieftain.  
*Kamous.* Dictionary.  
*Kasbah.* Castle; fortress.  
*Khan.* Turkish hostelry.  
*Mahmil.* Litter.  
*Marabout.* A saint or his tomb.  
*Moghrîb.* Sunset (prayer). The western (land), i.e. Morocco.  
*Mouloud.* Feast celebrating the birthday of Mohammed.  
*Muezzin.* Crier proclaiming the hours of prayer.  
*Mufti.* Officer who expounds the Law.  
*Ouchem.* Tribal tattoo mark.  
*Oued.* River; dry river-bed.  
*Oukil.* Representative.  
*Rais.* Commanding officer.  
*Razzia.* Raid.  
*Sharif.* Descendant of the Prophet.  
*Smala.* Abd el Kader’s great encampment.  
*Taleb.* Scholar (lit. ‘one who seeks’).  
*Tawaf.* Ceremony of circumambulating the Kaabah.  
*Ulemas.* Doctors of the Law.  
*Yataghan.* Turkish sword.  
*Zaouïa.* Almost the equivalent of a monastery.  
*Zouaves.* Native infantry.

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